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DISCUSSION GROUPS

JUL-5 1935

Summary report of a Conference held in Washington  
February 4, 5, 6, and 7, 1935.

In response to many requests from institutions, groups and individuals, Secretary Henry A. Wallace wrote on January 18 to the administrative heads of land grant colleges of ten states, inviting them to send representatives to a Discussion Conference in Washington.

The Secretary, in his letter, began: "One of the great present day challenges of agriculture is to provide opportunities for farmers and their families to obtain in fields aside from agricultural methods, information and more adequate means of understanding economic and social questions and changes."

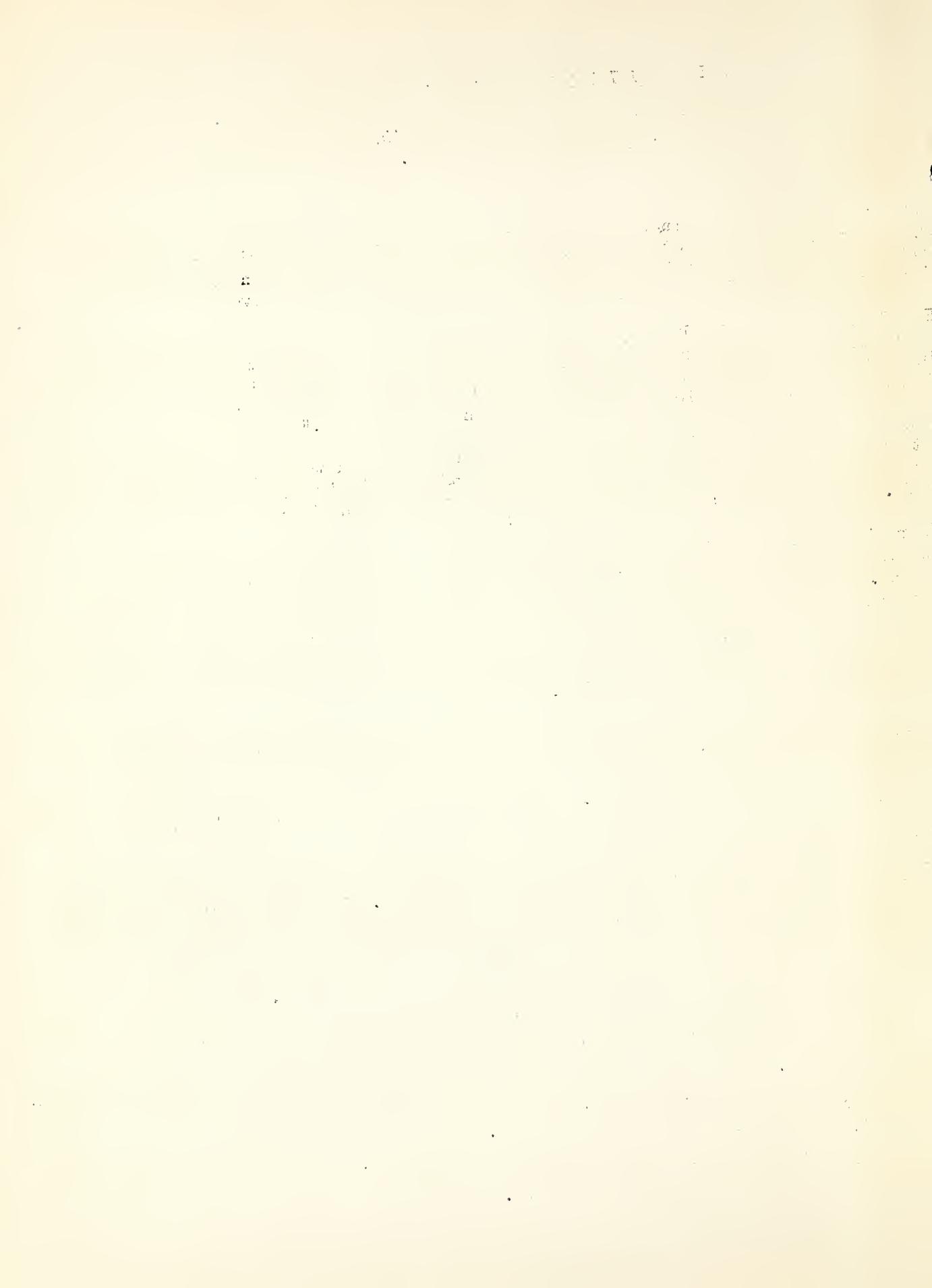
Economy demanded that the states at this time be limited to ten; those to whom invitations were addressed were selected as typical of their various regions and because of a particular interest shown in discussion methods by members of their staffs. The Secretary's letter continued:

"There is an avenue which appears to hold great promise for meeting this need, centering about the development of forums and discussion groups in rural areas. A committee of members of the Department staff has recently given this subject considerable study and has concluded that the discussion method deserves greater encouragement. But it is felt that, while the method is old, more knowledge of discussion techniques and the whole field of their possibilities is highly desirable, warranting experimentation.

"Because of the special interest which I am informed you and members of your staff have in this subject, I am turning to you and the heads of nine other state agricultural colleges with a view of seeking cooperation in carrying on a project in conducting experiments with forums and discussion groups during February and early March.

"Unfortunately, I cannot extend to you the offer of as much financial support as I should like but the project is rather a modest one. It is, nevertheless, highly significant for the reason that from it may be obtained information, particularly a body of knowledge respecting the relative merits of various discussion techniques which may point to the desirability of the Department undertaking to seek greater financial support for this activity in the future.

"The committee came to the conclusion that in view of the shortness of time available before spring farm work will begin, the project this year, in order to be of the most value to the cooperating institutions, might best be carried on over a period of six weeks. Each of the cooperating state colleges could arrange for at least five discussion groups, possibly one in each of five counties with a program of six or more forums to be conducted in each. The project does not, however, contemplate any arbitrary routine uniform in all the states, but rather that the work in each follow a program planned by each with a view to best serving the purpose of learning more about discussion technique .



"It is hoped that you will cooperate in this project and that you will designate some individual to take charge of the program in your state. It is further hoped that this person might work under your personal direction. Probably the State Extension Service might be able to work out an arrangement with you, particularly in relation to organizing groups, places for meeting and other matters.

"While the project contemplates six discussions for each of five discussion groups to be carried on over a period of six weeks, preparations are being made for supplying comprehensive material on ten topics or more. It would not, of course, be obligatory to any cooperating institution to use any or all of this material.

"Prior to starting the forums, a conference will be held here for persons who are to have active charge of the project in each state.

"During this conference the Department will have available here for consultation, as well as for parts in regularly scheduled programs, members of the staff and others who have had experience in conducting forums and establishing discussion groups. These will be persons who are equipped to contribute information based on both study and experience regarding various techniques for stimulating discussion, the relative merits of large and small groups, types of topics, and similar information. The Department also stands ready to supply press and radio cooperation in carrying out this program, details of which can be worked out in final form during the conference of the state forum directors here.

"In the meantime, the Department is planning to prepare a bulletin which can serve as a guide for the use of group leaders, which we hope to have available about February 15 to all who may have need of it, including farm organizations and clubs. But it has become clear in efforts so far made in connection with the preparation of this guide that a much greater body of knowledge is needed if agricultural leadership is to realize upon the potentialities of the discussion method.

"This project, covering as it would counties in important and representative states, could supply a basis for later programs, which would be invaluable. Perhaps stimulation at the beginning may be as far as we need to proceed. There are many who feel that the need for discussion opportunities is so great that a movement might get under way without the necessity of any governmental participation. I believe this would be highly desirable but that assistance at the start is entirely warranted.

"I wish to make clear that the interest of the Department in the discussion method is not based on a desire to convert persons to a given viewpoint."

TEN STATES sent representatives. Their names and the register of attendance are listed at the end of this report.

M. L. Wilson, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, had been designated by the Secretary as head of a Committee on discussion groups. He opened the conference on the morning of February 4. "It is true," he said, "That while each age probably liked to consider itself a transitional one, facing peculiarly difficult problems, nevertheless we of this era do assuredly have some right to feel that this could



be reckoned what geologists used to call a cataclysmic epoch, when the relatively quiet processes which had endured for long periods suddenly were interrupted by violent change. This makes the thorough discussion of fundamental issues especially important now."

Continuing, Mr. Wilson said, in part:

"Perhaps we haven't given enough attention to the farmer as a citizen. I believe that there are some definite limits to the functions of the Department of Agriculture and the state colleges, but we certainly should not be unresponsive to the larger needs. From a good many sources I get the impression that farm people want to understand better all that is going on in this changing world of today. They recognize the play of forces affecting their businesses and lives, forces which originate beyond the boundaries of their farms, or their states, or even their nation. They want to talk about these things and try to see what they mean. From land grant college officials, farm organization leaders, and from farmers themselves, we hear this call. The purposes of this conference is to see of what assistance we can be in filling this need."

Concluding, the Assistant Secretary asked Dr. Carl Taylor, to serve as Chairman. Dr. Taylor presided informally throughout. He pointed out that discussion and democracy are closely related and that the relation of governmental agencies to discussion groups needs to be very carefully considered. He reiterated the paragraph of Secretary Wallace's letter, which said--

"The interest of the Department of Agriculture in the discussion method is not based on a desire to convert persons to any given viewpoint."

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Secretary Wallace came into the conference, and expanded his concept of free discussion. Thus:

#### LET THEM DECIDE

"I do not conceive this as in any sense a propaganda movement, or a mere handing down of a fact which someone has discovered. I hold with the new method of teaching which has grown up in the last few years--that the object is not to impart facts but to get students to think. If this movement toward wider discussion of great public issues is to be worth anything, then, possibly, public agencies must supply machinery for discussion, to help it move along expeditiously. But when it comes to the end that is to be reached the decisions that are to be made, the discussion leaders should not suggest any particular end or decision."

Mr. Wallace added that "it seems to me we are in a bit of a race, to get certain decisions made that we have needed to make ever since the World War. In encouraging that discussion of public issues in which farm people and other citizens are already engaged, you are in something extraordinarily alive. It is something much more living than the old-time college and high school debates. Maybe the thing that we of this generation will finally work out will prove no better, but it does seem to me that we ought to be able to achieve some better means of getting undesirable subjects discussed in a real and interesting and fair way."



In the general exchange of opinions, LeRoy Bowman said:

"I could talk for an hour on the relation between dictatorship and speech on the one hand, and democracy and discussion on the other." He said that under a dictatorship, the people just sat or stood and listened to speeches; but that in a democracy, they themselves discussed public issues and ultimately decided what was to be done.

Charles A. Taylor of New York said toward the end of the conference: "If we are going to spend some of our time on this discussion project, we've got to have some definite object in mind which we can state clearly. And I conceive that definite object to be something as follows. This country has come to the point where the future of agriculture rests on the existence of an intelligent, thoughtful farm population which understands things outside of its own district and market. We are trying to get this farm population to start a trend of procedure which will constantly increase the amount of this necessary understanding."

W. J. Green of the state of Washington said: "Out of all this there may come greater tolerance and a broader attitude toward national policies. Regional special interests may not then so dominate the minds of all of us. But we have got to make it very clear just why Federal and State agencies are taking an interest in this matter. We must have everyone understand that this is not a campaign to put over some particular program, such as the wheat program, or the corn-hog program, or anything like that; but that it is instead an effort to promote an educational method, the method of full and free discussion of great public issues. At the same time, we assume that real results will flow from such discussion. Dean Coffey of Minnesota hit the nail on the head a few minutes ago when he said that discussion should leave people with the feeling that they're better prepared to decide. The man who doesn't reach some conclusion ultimately, who doesn't do something, think something, isn't worth anything to society. We must not try to force convictions—we must confine ourselves to merely providing conveniences and aids for discussion —yet we must assume that as a result of all this people will be better prepared to form real opinions on a much broader basis."

#### Methods of Conducting Discussion

Throughout the conference it was emphasized that the way the conference was conducted was in itself a demonstration of discussion method. In addition, specific attention was given to details of discussion technique, such as the function of leadership in discussion groups, the proper types of material or information to be used and when and how it should be introduced, and the relative value of the informal discussion group, the forum, the panel, the debate, or other systems of discussion.

During the conference several men, well known for their interest in discussion methods, came in, made brief talks, and answered questions. Among them were: LeRoy E. Bowman and Edmund deS. Brunner, of Teachers College, Columbia University, and E. Y. Landis of the American Country Life Association.

At one point Dr. Carl Taylor said: "I have, as the 'entrepreneur of discussion" at this conference, tried to make myself a bug under a microscope so that you could study what you thought was right and what you thought was wrong about my methods of leading a discussion group. This is a discussion group right now, and



we are exemplifying the art that we hope to get more people interested in."

Dr. Taylor then analyzed the procedure at the various sessions of the conference: "At the morning session on the first day we came here and found ourselves in the same position people are always in at the opening of discussion. We needed to get acquainted with each other and also needed to get acquainted with the main issues that were to be evolved from the fundamental subject before us. No effort was made to put ideas over on you. You gradually opened the process of discussion yourselves. Nothing was staged. The thing just got to going.

"That afternoon at the second session of the conference, we began to wrestle with the issues that were evolving from the fundamental subject. We began to get these issues out where we could see them and where we could begin to devote a little detailed attention to them here and there.

"The second day, we started in the morning with a sort of text before us. This was the little pamphlet on methods of conducting discussions, which has been prepared here for us to consider and revise as best we can. The pamphlet raised concrete questions about leadership, materials, and so on, and we really got down to discussing details along these lines. I kept in my chair most of the time, we all knew each other and were all full of comments and suggestions. It was a typical second day gathering, I should say, of a discussion group.

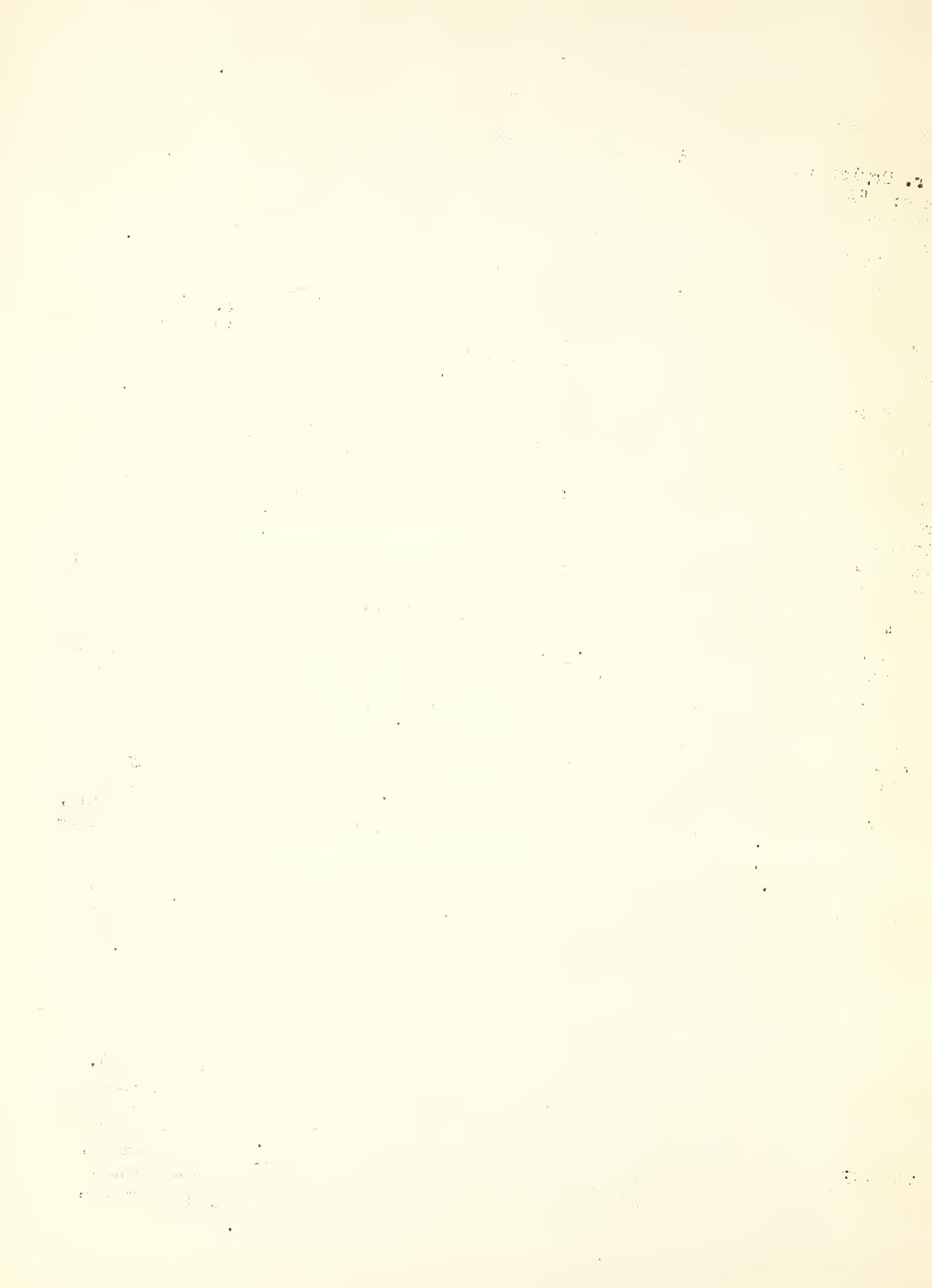
"Then in the afternoon of the second day, we had a combination of the panel, the forum, and the straight discussion methods. Landis, Bowman, Brunner, were constituted informally into a panel. They sat over there by the wall and were asked many questions by all of us. They talked back and forth among themselves about discussion methods. Then in succession they made more formal talks, standing up and addressing us, and later being questioned. And so that was a forum for a time. Afterwards there was just general discussion. So you see we had all three methods exemplified in that session.

"On the morning of the third day, I said five times as much as at any preceding meeting. It amounted almost to a debate between me and other members of the conference. I was up on my feet a great deal, arguing points, challenging, asking questions. This brought out a still different method of leading a discussion group.

"My own opinion is that the second day's sessions were the best. In the morning session of that day, you were somewhat acquainted and went right ahead in a live fashion. In the afternoon, you had people here whom you felt knew a great deal about discussion methods, and you were anxious to ask them questions and get answers that would definitely help you in this project."

#### ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

After this summing up by Dr. Taylor, still another method was adopted. Those who had been attending as guests of the conference remained away, and only the representatives of the state colleges (including Mr. Bush of Texas) attended, with some members of the Department of Agriculture committee. This made the group much smaller and made it possible to adopt the typical round-table procedure, with all present literally sitting around a table, spreading out their materials, and discussing very informally types of information needed for discussion groups, and ways of proceeding in encouraging the formation of such groups.



Somewhat of a consensus was reached on the subject of discussion methods. In general, it was felt that groups should be relatively small, somewhere between thirty and forty in number; that the open discussion method, rather than the forum or panel method, would probably prove the most effective; that the leader of discussion should not be merely a silent chairman but should endeavor to stimulate discussion in as few words as possible, and that it would be best to have such leaders local people who were well known in their community; that the most popular and effective subjects for discussion would probably be great public issues connected in one way or another with agriculture; that it was necessary to have accurate information at hand for discussion groups, but that it was of the greatest importance to introduce this in such a way that there would not be undue directing of the mind of the group, and so that the presentation of such material would not prematurely choke off full and free canvassing of all the various possibilities.

Tentative outlines of discussion material which might be supplied by the Department of Agriculture, if the states wished it, were read and discussed. It was stressed throughout that this material should raise questions rather than try to answer them; that every known point of view on the subject should be honestly indicated in the material; and that there should be some reference list for further reading by those especially interested.

Alvin L. Crable of Oklahoma, commenting on the choice of subjects, said: "People don't care what specific subjects are discussed so long as they feel they are to be discussed by men who know something about them. But I do think that our people in Oklahoma would often welcome subjects that would project their thinking ahead for twenty-five years at least."

E. W. Gaither of North Carolina, in discussing a proposal that a pamphlet be issued pointing out ways of developing intelligent leadership of discussion groups, said that the pamphlet ought to emphasize the limitations which a discussion leader should impose upon himself so that the danger of the leader "running away with the show" might be obviated. Mr. Gaither also suggested that, while in general the panel might not be so effective as straight discussion, there might be times, when some particularly difficult subject was being handled, when the panel would be very effective.

In this connection, Dr. George Gemmell of Kansas pointed out that there should be no effort at standardization, that every State should try freely all the different methods that had been discussed at the conference. He added: "I have been particularly impressed, though, by the statement made earlier here that something new should come out of this conference. We mustn't just go on doing the same old thing. We must be willing to experiment and pioneer and try to help people take hold in a new way of these new problems which are confronting us all now."

J. P. Schmidt of Ohio said that, no matter what method was followed, there would always be some people who thought discussion got nowhere. This criticism, he said, should not be taken too seriously. He added: "Let's not try to make these meetings what might be called forgodsakers' meetings. You know how it is -- a discussion will be going along very well and helping people to think, and then somebody will get up and say that there's been a lot of talk, but forgodsake let's DO something. Well, whatever method we use, let's not try to crowd people into



doing things too fast. Let's encourage them to talk, to think."

Paul C. Taff of Iowa said that he thought preliminary conferences with men who had been asked to act as discussion leaders would do much to make the meetings successful. He said: "It's a good thing to get tuned up a little in matters of this sort, get the leader interested, and then he'll interest the group more and draw it out."

#### Plans for Encouraging Discussion

The final sessions of the conference were devoted to working out plans for the encouraging of the formation of discussion groups in the states represented, during the latter half of February. Secretary Wallace, in his letter of invitation to the conference, had spoken of "forums and discussion groups during February and early March." He had suggested that, "in view of the shortness of time available before spring farm work will begin, the project this year, in order to be of the most value to the cooperating institutions, might best be carried on over a period of six weeks. Each of the cooperating state colleges could arrange for at least five discussion groups, possibly one in each of five counties with a program of six or more forums to be conducted in each. The project does not, however, contemplate any arbitrary routine in all the states, but rather that the work in each follow a program planned by each with a view to best serving the purpose of learning more about discussion technique."

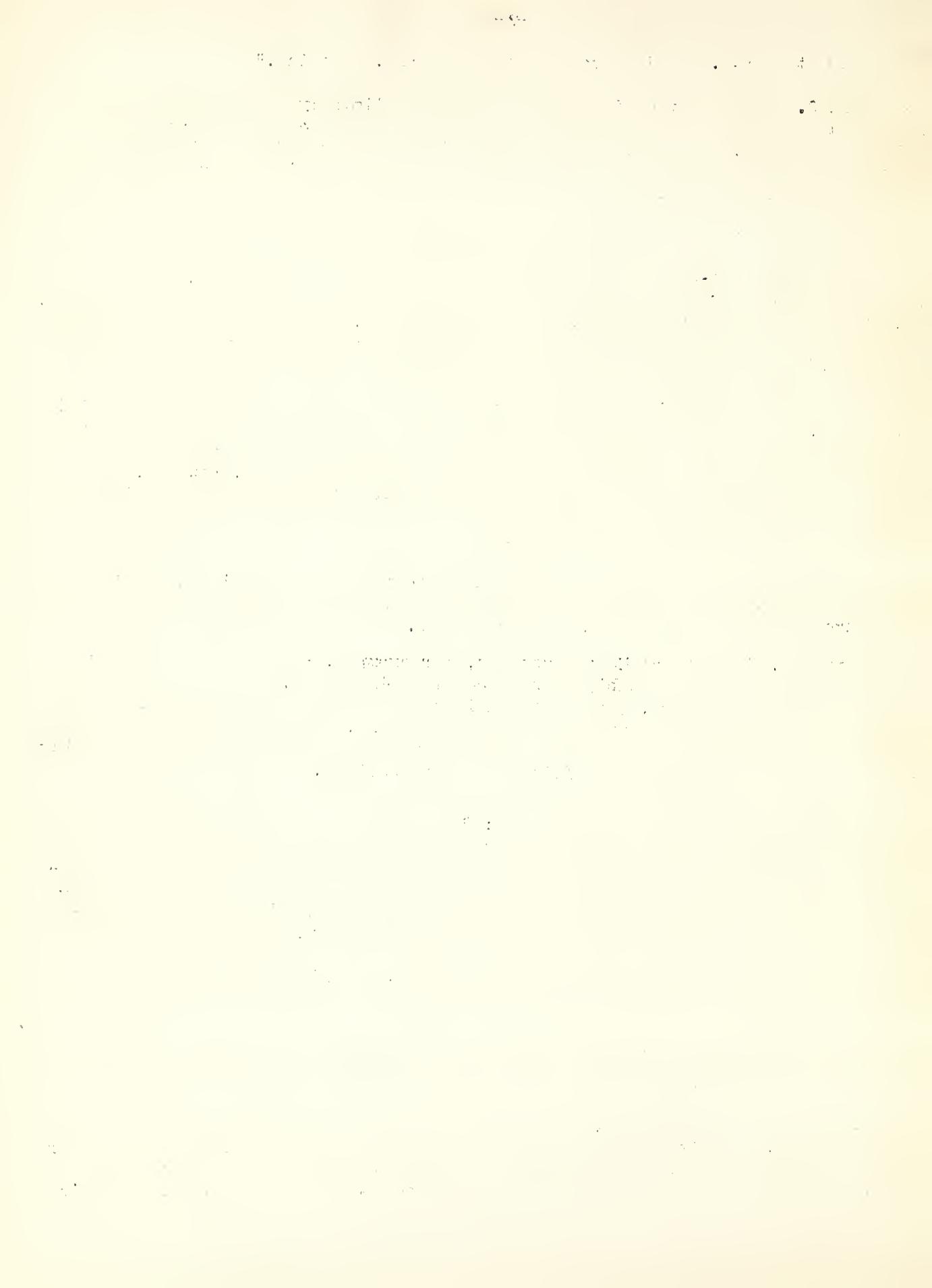
In general, the conference seemed agreed that the Secretary's suggestion would be followed, but with many variations in the different states as to the type of group, topic arrangement, and leadership.

George W. Westcott of Massachusetts, for example, said that in his State most of the groups would probably be some 30 or 40 in number, that one group might be confined to young farmers, another to business men and farmers combined, another to people from a large town invited by the county agent, another to people in a small hill town, still another to a group of women who wished to hold a discussion meeting and have their husbands present to join in the proceedings.

Dean W. C. Coffey of Minnesota said: "I am looking forward especially to encouraging discussion among a group of young people in one community, most of whom have been through the 4-H Clubs, some of whom are graduates of our agricultural college and who are unmarried, live at home, and are to some extent in partnership with their fathers in farm projects, and who live in a strictly rural atmosphere. I'd like to see these young people form a discussion group and hold five or six meetings. A preliminary meeting with them could be held to arrange for leadership they were familiar with to select topics. I think they, like all of us, may be led to a more broad and tolerant attitude as the result of participating in such discussion."

Dr. George Gemmell of Kansas said that he had in mind a group of retired farmers who would probably enjoy a discussion series very much.

H. H. Cutler of Utah said: "I have no thought of restricting this to farmers entirely. I felt that we might put the responsibility on the community for selecting a meeting place. Various types of people occur to me who might act as leaders. A grade school principal in one place, the president of a business men's



service club in another. I think that groups with varying types in them might have some advantages over more homogeneous ones. And I thought of using the panel method with a group of some 500 people, say." Mr. Cutler added that he was especially interested in endeavoring to set up some criterion of success or accomplishment, so that definite results could be measured and evaluated. It was agreed by the conference that, with this view in mind, there should be careful reports made of the work in the various states so that all could learn from each.

Roy F. Hendrickson presided at the final session. He said that in communicating with the Department of Agriculture for possible assistance in connection with discussion activity Assistant Secretary M. L. Wilson should be addressed. He said arrangements have been made to deal with all requests for materials expeditiously.

R. H. Bush of Texas said that while he was not at the conference as a representative of his college, he was sure that Texas would be very glad to receive all materials sent out to the other states and that he believed effective use of them could be made in literally thousands of communities throughout his state. He said that the Texas Extension Service had already held many discussion meetings through cooperation with the Department of Agriculture.

Dean Coffey of Minnesota said that he thought the Extension Service would in many instances take active charge of the work of encouraging discussion. But he added that, in such cases, the extension men should be thought of as representatives of the entire college in their state and that wherever possible other groups of the college should be drawn into the work.

Director C. W. Warburton, of the Extension Service, concurred with the thought expressed by Dean Coffey. He said: "It is evident from the Secretary's letter of invitation that he contemplated this. This is a varied group, Not all are from the Extension Service. You represent your colleges, not simply the Extension Service. I am sure we should all like to see rather wide variation throughout, not only in the types of groups asked to hold discussion meetings, but in the types of people who worked at this project of encouraging the holding of such meetings. We should all like to see business men discuss matters with farmers, for instance, and throughout this conference it has been brought out that women should be invited to join in, as well as the young people, the older people, retired farmers, and so on. This should not be limited too narrowly."



REGISTER OF ATTENDANCE

STATE COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES

J. P. Schmidt, Ohio State University  
J. W. Harrelson, Administrative Dean, North Carolina State College  
E. W. Gaither, North Carolina State College  
George Gemmell, Kansas State College  
W. C. Coffey, Dean, College of Agriculture, University of Minnesota  
H. H. Cutler, Utah State Agricultural College  
Paul C. Taff, Iowa State College  
George W. Westcott, Massachusetts State College  
A. L. Crable, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College  
Charles A. Taylor, New York State College of Agriculture  
William J. Green, Washington State Agricultural College

OTHERS

H. A. Wallace	Secretary of Agriculture
M. L. Wilson	Assistant Secretary of Agriculture
C. W. Warburton	Director of Extension
M. S. Eisenhower	Director of Information
Alfred D. Stedman	Assistant Administrator, AAA
Roy F. Hendrickson	Assistant to the Assistant Secretary
Carl C. Taylor	Regional Director, Land Policy Section, Raleigh, N.C.
B. Y. Landis	American Country Life Association
LeRoy E. Bowman	Teachers College, Columbia University
Edmund deS. Brunner	Teachers College, Columbia University
Miriam Birdseye	Extension Service
C. B. Smith	Assistant Director of Extension
A. B. Graham	Extension Service
W. D. Boutwell	Office of Education
Helen Hill Miller	Information, AAA
R. J. Haskell	Extension Service
H. M. Dixon	Extension Service
C. P. Close	Extension Service
Grace E. Frysinger	Extension Service
Fred C. Meier	Extension Service
Gertrude L. Warren	Extension Service
H. W. Gilbertson	Extension Service
Lester A. Schlup	Extension Service
R. L. Burgess	Field Information Representative, AAA
Roy C. Jones	Bureau of Dairy Industry
R. H. Beach	Extension Organization Specialist, Texas
O. S. Fisher	Extension Service
H. L. Shrader	Extension Service
I. W. Duggan	Economist, Cotton Production Section
M. S. Conway	Extension Service
W. A. Lloyd	Extension Service



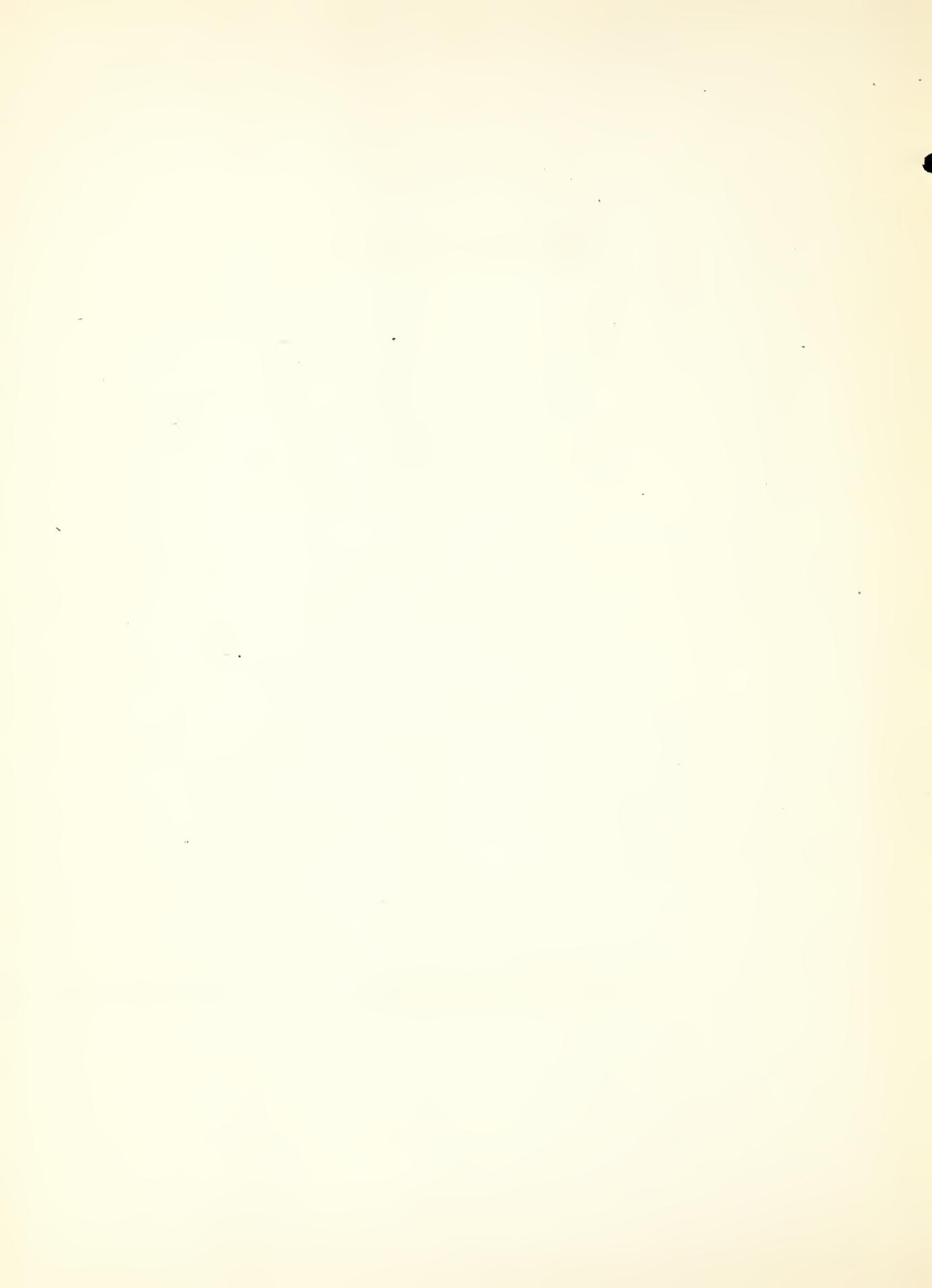
Marie F. McGuire	Regional Contact Section, AAA
E. Merritt	Extension Service
S. P. Lyle	Extension Service
Reuben Brigham	Chief, Regional Contact Section, Information, AAA
A. B. Nystrom	Extension Service
John R. Fleming	Assistant Director of Information
Morse Salisbury	Chief, Radio Service, Department of Agriculture
Arthur Chew	Information, Department of Agriculture



DISCUSSION

A BRIEF GUIDE TO METHODS

February, 1935.  
Department of Agriculture  
Washington, D. C.



## DISCUSSION

### A BRIEF GUIDE TO METHODS

A new interest in national affairs is manifest. People are recognizing that the formation of national policies is a continuing process. Farmers, like others, are seeking means of getting pertinent information and then frankly discussing fundamental issues.

Methods of expressing this popular interest are as yet undeveloped in many areas. Many people in those areas feel a certain reticence in expressing themselves in meetings. They are unaccustomed to participation in public discussion.

In the course of the past decade, a considerable body of experience has been developed covering a variety of means and methods that have proved useful in facilitating public discussion by adults of issues of national importance.

In response to the general demand for the establishment of centers of discussion, particularly in rural areas, the following brief summary of the three methods in most general use has been prepared. Appended to it is a bibliography which will enable persons interested to pursue the subject further.

#### WHY USE DISCUSSION METHODS?

Discussion methods offer several advantages for the consideration of fundamental issues and policies.

1. They permit the development of opportunities for the individual to think and to express his thoughts. Through the give and take of what is said in a discussion group by himself and his neighbors, the individual acquires the ability:
  - (a) to look behind catch phrases and see if they have meaning,

- (b) to analyze policies as stated by the parties or interests putting them forward,
- (c) to formulate and express his own point of view on those issues and policies.

2. At the same time, the discussion method contributes to the enlightenment of the public and to the civic vitality of the community:

- (a) by affording an opportunity to its citizens to become active participants in public affairs instead of being mere passive recipients of radio programs, speeches, lectures, newspaper articles and the like.
- (b) by opening national problems to serious public consideration. This grounding of local, regional and national issues and policies in the minds of the people is indispensable to the functioning of a democracy.

#### THREE IMPORTANT DISCUSSION METHODS

The methods of public discussion described below have been developed out of the diverse experience of many groups, but underlying all of them are certain assumptions:

1. It is assumed that the persons using these methods, themselves wish to participate in what is going on. Hence the lecture method of considering public issues is inappropriate to their purposes.
2. It is assumed that the persons using these methods are convinced of the desirability of hearing a wide variety of points of view on the subject. Hence the formal procedure of the debate, with its emphasis upon the matching of points pro with points con rather than upon the mutual canvassing of all

points of view, is often unsuitable for their use.

3. It is assumed that the persons using these methods wish to acquaint themselves not only with information, but with judgments and opinions. Hence, the presentation of facts alone is considered insufficient.

#### THE DISCUSSION GROUP, THE PANEL, AND THE FORUM

The principal methods which have been developed on the basis of these assumptions are the "discussion group", the "panel", and the "forum", and a combination of these.

#### THE DISCUSSION GROUP

If local circumstances permit its use, and in rural areas the circumstances seem to be especially favorable, the method which is likely best to meet present requirements is the informal method of the "discussion group". This is because it permits the widest measure of popular participation. This method has been described as the modern equivalent of the cracker-barrel confab around the stove at the cross-roads store. There are countless informal and unplanned discussions by groups daily. The "discussion method" seeks to foster and extend these into increasingly profitable uses for individuals and groups, while retaining the quality of easy informality.

The primary consideration in the development of discussion is to obtain from members of groups the expression of a variety of genuine differences of viewpoint. Expression has shown that this can best be done if the group is not too large. A large group is almost certain to take on the character of an audience. Groups, which are too small, unless they are accustomed to working together, are likely to provide insufficient differences of viewpoint to assure continued discussion. There is no hard and fast rule as to the number of persons making up a group in order to achieve maximum discussion. Fewer than ten is probably too small a group and more than thirty persons too large in order to obtain the best results in open discussion.

It is desirable, if not necessary, for a discussion group to be directed by a leader or chairman. In the selection of this leader it is well to keep in mind the following points:

1. The leader should be a person who is reasonably well informed on the general range of subjects which the group is likely to discuss.
2. The leader should be a person capable of acting as conciliator of the different points of view represented in the group. Under ordinary circumstances, it is, therefore, preferable that he should not be prominently related to any organized group in the community that is forwarding a program in connection with the subjects to be discussed.
3. He should be the type of person who takes more pleasure in drawing out others than in being heard himself. He should not hesitate, however, to stimulate discussion when it tends to lag or to bring it back to focus on the discussion topic when it tends to drift far afield.

Important functions of the leader are:

- (1) To make certain the issue or policy to be discussed is clear.
- (2) To make certain that the facts relevant to the subject under discussion are available. This may be done:
  - (a) by distributing material to the group members long enough before the meeting for them to read it,
  - (b) by asking a member of the group to summarize the material at the opening of the meeting, or doing this himself,
  - (c) by inviting specialists to sit in with the group, or possibly to give a five to fifteen minute

summary of the facts at the beginning of the meeting. (Specialists should not be asked in, however, if their presence is likely to make members of the group reluctant to express opinions.)

(3) To make sure that the different points of view in the group are heard. This may be done:

- (a) by getting the group to set limits on the time to be taken for statements by its members, and on the number of times any one member may speak before all of the others who wish to be heard have had a chance, and by genially but firmly enforcing those limits.
- (b) by asking questions calculated to draw out unexpressed views. These questions may be either framed generally or pointed directly at certain members by reference to past expressions of opinion on their part.

(4) To summarize, or to call on members of the group to summarize the progress of the discussion at various stages.

(Formality should be avoided.) Under normal circumstances, the taking of votes in a discussion group is undesirable.

The taking of votes has the same tendency as the use of the debating method in leading the group to take sides, and then to defend the side taken rather than to canvass the whole subject. The use of summaries which give the general development of the discussion along with the alternative points of view presented keeps a group together where the voting process divides.

(5) To maintain the attitude that thorough canvass of the problem under discussion is more important than hasty arrival at opinions and solutions.

#### THE PANEL

In some cases and in some places the formation of the small groups essential to the use of the discussion method may seem impracticable. Use of the panel is frequently a successful way to develop public discussion where the group is large. A single rural meeting may be attended by 100 or more farmers. This method does not provide, however, the same measure of popular participation as does the more informal discussion group.

A panel is a small discussion group occupying the platform and carrying on its discussion before an audience. A panel discussion can be conducted in a variety of ways, always, however, incorporating certain essential features. There should be a chairman and a group of four to eight members of the panel. In the selection of the panel members, the object should be to provide for the presentation of the chief points of view on a given subject by people of relatively equal ability. Unless care is taken in choosing panel members, the audience is likely to carry away a one-sided impression of the subject.

Panel discussions can be carried on either independently or in connection with the remarks of a speaker who first addresses the audience. Under normal circumstances the panel first discusses the topic in question sufficiently to bring out the chief points of view; then the chairman invites members of the audience to participate in the discussion, either addressing questions to other members of the panel or to the speaker, or presenting their own points of view.

### THE FORUM

The forum is still another useful medium of public discussion. Where this method is used one or more speakers are asked to present their views. After they have finished the chairman or leader then opens the meeting to discussion by the audience, whose members may either contribute their own views or address inquiries to the speakers. The function of the leader here, as in the case of discussion groups, is to stimulate wide participation in the discussion and without holding it within rigid confines to keep it definitely focused.

### COMBINATIONS OF THE THREE METHODS

Forum and panel discussions, when taken by themselves, are less satisfactory than the discussion group in providing a means of popular participation. But they offer possibilities which should not be ignored for use in combination with the discussion group method.

A well-directed forum or panel discussion, held at the time when discussion groups are forming, may bring in more, and a wider variety of members, than might otherwise be reached.

After the several discussion groups of an area have been for some time in operation, area forums or panel discussions, the participants selected from the local discussion groups, may be held. This is particularly desirable where local or regional issues have formed the subject of group discussion, and where there is need or desire for a group meeting likely to attract more people than can conveniently use the discussion method.

### MEETING PLANS

Chairmen who are preparing for discussions, using any of the methods, will find it useful to make sure in advance --.

1. That the time of the meeting does not conflict with other community meetings.
2. That the place of the meeting is such that all members of the community will feel free to come, and will find the surroundings congenial.
3. That an atmosphere of informality prevails. Seating arrangements should be comfortable and chairs placed so that those participating in a discussion can see each other.
4. Chairmen will find it highly desirable at the first meeting of the group to give a brief explanation of what the discussion method is and to find out what issues the group wants to discuss. Interest is certain to be greater if the group makes its own program, choosing the local and national issues it is most interested in discussing.

#### SELECTION OF SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION

Here, again, there is no one method that can be laid down in advance. Some leaders prefer the ultra-democratic procedure of calling a group together without any well-defined subject in view and then drawing up the topics out of the interests and concerns that develop among the members of the group. This method requires great skill, however. Leaders with limited experience may not wish to use it.

Other leaders may want to announce a subject as a starter and let the group determine what the future aspects of the topic are or what new topics will be taken up. Still others may want to go to the group with a list of topics, to learn which of them appeal to the members and to let them select among the suggested themes.

What are good subjects for discussion? - This also is an important question. In general, subjects must be those in which there is a considerable degree of interest in the community. Again, there may be

subjects on which members of the group have special experience or on which they have been doing some reading. Subjects may, or may not, be put into question form. A question which permits of a definitive "Yes" or "No" answer is ordinarily not a good one for group discussion.

#### CONDUCTING THE DISCUSSION

There is no one method of conducting a group discussion. Topics vary so widely, the information available in the minds of members of the group is so diverse, and the experience of different groups in group discussion is so different that what works best in one situation may not be the best procedure in another. The following suggestions, however, are offered as of general aid:

In practically all group discussion meetings the topic for discussion will have been chosen and be known in advance by the members of the group and the leader, at least, will have given some thought to the scope and content of the topic.

The first necessary step to a successful discussion is to evolve the issues at stake in the topic. If possible, issues should be stated by members of the group. If this cannot be accomplished fairly easily, it may be necessary for the leader to state one or two issues in order to start discussion. It should be kept in mind, however, that a discussion of what the issues are, may be just as fruitful as is controversy on the issues once they are agreed upon.

After the issues have been evolved by the most natural method possible and have become clear to the group, either through a summary by the leader or through having been placed on a blackboard before the group, the next step in procedure is to obtain wide and varied discussion. In this process the

leader should take care to see that all points of view are presented and that the group is helped to make a thorough inquiry into and canvass of the body of fact and opinion available on the topic.

There is no absolute and unvarying rule which can be followed in introducing information into a group discussion. In some instances it may be desirable to start the discussion with a brief resume of pertinent data. In other instances it may be best to present facts or data at that point in the progress of discussion where they apply, and in some instances the presentation of data may be made in a short summary at the conclusion of discussion.

In no case should the leader (or visiting specialist) allow controversy to continue on a point which can be briefly settled by stating an authoritative fact, the presentation of which would later embarrass one of the disputants. Neither should data, the interpretation of which is controversial, be presented in such a manner or at such a time as to stop fruitful discussion. Data presented in a group discussion must always be briefly stated and be presented in the most lucid manner possible. Simple charts or graphs are always better vehicles of presentation than detailed statistics.

The final step in group discussion, though one which may not always be taken, is a summary by the leader or some member of the group. When a summary is presented, the conclusions stated should be only those which have been reached by the group. It should be kept in mind constantly that the purpose of discussion is more to stimulate thinking than to find immediate solution of problems and that the creative experience of participation in discussion is often more valuable than arrival at conclusions.

Before adjournment it is highly desirable that the topic and time of meeting for the next discussion be determined and announced. If literature

on the next topic or the one just discussed is at hand, it should be distributed at this time and all assistance possible given to persons who want bibliographies on group discussion topics.

#### MATERIALS -- PREPARATION OF DATA

The use of data depends upon the plan adopted by a discussion group. Discussion groups, whose topics are determined and announced in advance, can arouse in their members a desire to search out facts and opinions and to study them in preparation for the discussion. In some cases the search for materials as discussed elsewhere, can be left to certain members of the group. In any event, the search for data and the preparation of materials involves labor and planning. Frequently, it is wise to govern the selection of topics for discussion by the availability of materials.

Books in homes, school and public libraries obviously provide one of the primary sources of material. Newspapers, magazines and other periodicals can be employed. Many farm papers and farm organizations can be of assistance. The United States Department of Agriculture, state colleges of agriculture, County Extension Agents and other agricultural agencies, both public and private, can supply useful information. Government agencies generally are equipped to supply pamphlets, statistical data and other aids in their fields of activity.

But, again, there is no simple pathway for obtaining and selecting material which will make the best contribution to the discussion group. This task must depend upon the resourcefulness of those assigned to the responsibility of obtaining data or to the interest aroused in individuals who seek materials, although unassigned.

The importance of obtaining all possible light on the topic cannot

be over-emphasized. At the same time, groups should not lose sight of their main purpose -- to arouse discussion -- and interest in this central purpose is likely to be lost if most of the period available for discussion is devoted to statements of fact, or the reading of opinions.

The distinction between discussion groups and study groups should not be ignored. It is the experience of discussion groups that participants do not prepare for discussion in advance of meetings.

A stimulating discussion is almost certain to lead those who have participated to pursue their interest afterwards; the period of the discussion itself is best used to stimulate thought on, rather than assimilation of, material pertinent to the issue. Suggestions as to sources of reading and other materials for subsequent perusal by participants can be made a valuable by-product of the meetings.

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Discussion Group Topic No. 1

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WHAT KIND OF FOREIGN TRADE POLICIES  
DO AMERICAN FARMERS WANT?

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February, 1935.

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Topic: WHAT KIND OF FOREIGN TRADE POLICIES  
DO AMERICAN FARMERS WANT?

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American farmers have a heavy stake in foreign trade. Hundreds of millions of dollars worth of American farm products are exported each year. Hundreds of millions of dollars of foreign produced farm products are imported each year. The estimated value of American farm products exported in 1933 was less than one-fifth of their estimated value in 1919, and less than one-half of their estimated value in 1929. In terms of the volume of exports the decline was smaller but substantial, especially in the case of wheat, lard, and cotton.

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1. WHICH IS MOST IMPORTANT TO AMERICAN FARMERS -- THE NATION'S IMPORTS OR EXPORTS?
2. WHAT WILL BE THE EFFECT ON AGRICULTURE IN THIS COUNTRY IF EXPORTS CONTINUE TO DECREASE?
3. WHY HAVE EXPORTS OF AMERICAN FARM PRODUCTS FALLEN OFF IN RECENT YEARS?
4. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO AGRICULTURE IN THIS COUNTRY IF EXPORTS SHARPLY INCREASED?
5. DO WE WANT MORE IMPORTS; IF SO, OF WHAT?
6. WHAT WOULD BE A PRACTICAL FOREIGN TRADE PROGRAM?



## SOME PROS AND CONS

### I.

"The United States must live at home. It must produce everything it needs, buy as little as possible from abroad. Foreign trade means entangling alliances, may even mean war.

"Farmers must see that imports - industrial as well as agricultural - are restricted. A dollar spent for foreign goods, goes abroad; a dollar spent for American goods, stays in America. Competition with foreign producers in the home market, whether in agricultural or industrial products, is bound to rob the American farmer and workingman of part of his legitimate market. It is unfair competition, because many other countries have lower living standards, lower wages, cheaper land."

### II.

"The United States is part of the world, tied to other nations by the bonds of friendship, of humanity, as well as trade. We can only achieve maximum prosperity by removing trade barriers, at home and abroad. Those things we produce most efficiently, we ought to sell abroad as well as at home; those things other nations produce most efficiently, we shall want to buy from them.

"American farmers must see to it that exports are expanded. Few foreign producers can compete successfully with the American farmer. Let the imports come in, therefore, for only by accepting imports can a creditor nation, such as we are, enable foreign countries to pay for our exports. We can't sell abroad unless we buy abroad.

"America's higher standard of living has not come because of our high tariff policy, but in spite of it; it has come because of superior natural resources, an aggressive, ingenious, hard-working people, superior technical development, and the existence within the United States of an enormous free-trade area."



III.

"The old-time internationalism is dead. Free trade is impossible. But so is complete self-containment. The only way out is through treaties with individual nations, to build up an interchange of goods with those nations on a basis of mutual advantage.

"Complete free trade would be fine if it could be achieved without destroying industries and agricultural enterprises built up under protection, but it cannot be so achieved. Let's be realistic, and therefore selective in what we buy and sell abroad. Most of our imports ought to be products which do not compete with American products. Treaties with our foreign neighbors, carefully developed to protect American interests, will in time yield the maximum of foreign trade consistent with the national interest."

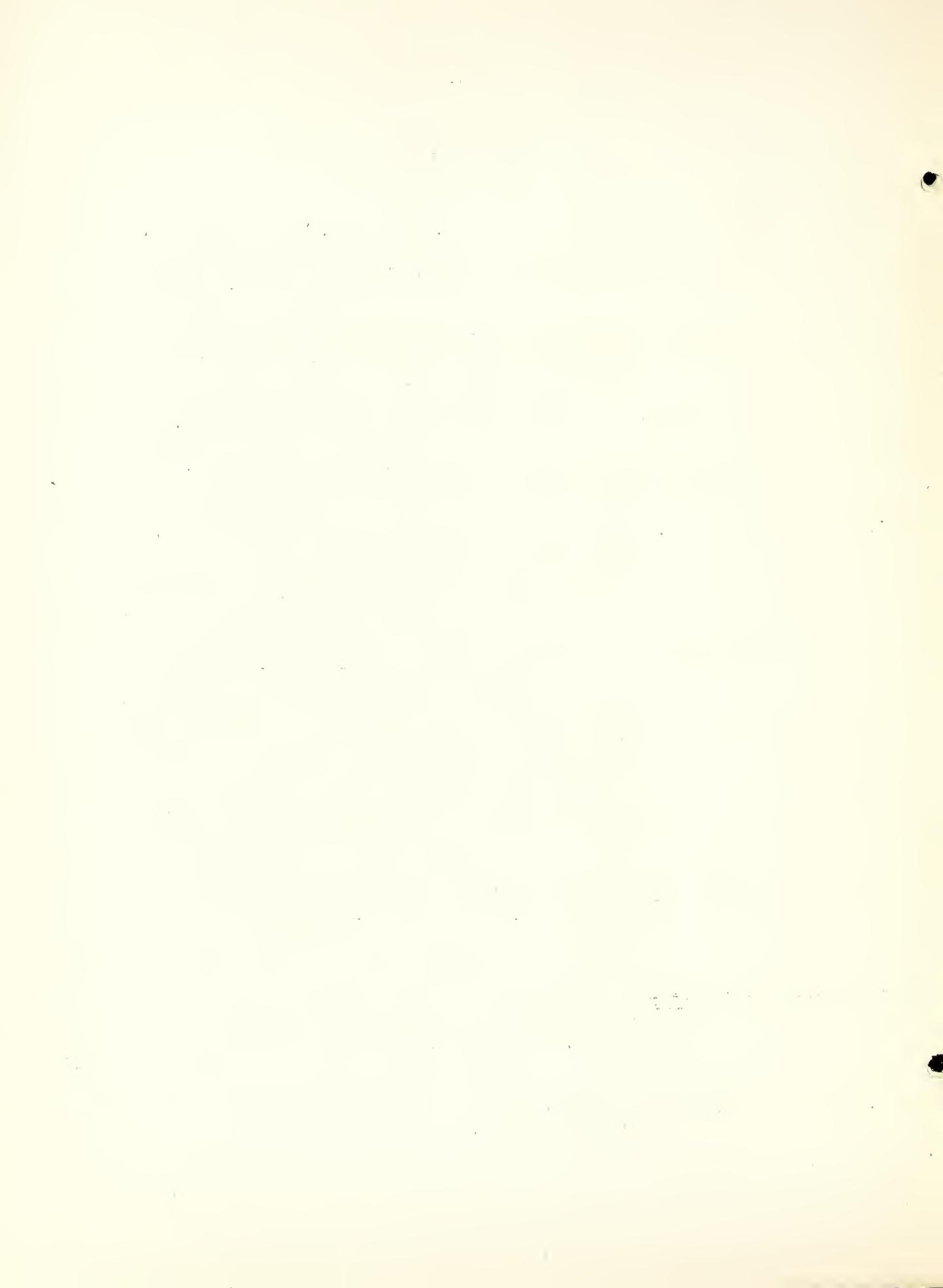
IV.

"Our foreign trade will continue to decline, and nothing can be done about it. Our farmers can't compete with the cheap lands of South America, Russia, Australia. Europe, striving for self-sufficiency for purposes of defense, won't let us export there. Perhaps no country, including the United States, will attain complete self-sufficiency; certainly it is economically unsound to try for it; but that is the world trend, and it must run its course. The only thing we can do is keep our export acres idle, or in grass or trees, and make what other internal adjustments we must."



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Group Discussion Topic No. 2

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IS IT IN THE INTEREST OF THE NATION TO HAVE  
MORE -- OR FEWER -- PEOPLE LIVING ON LAND?

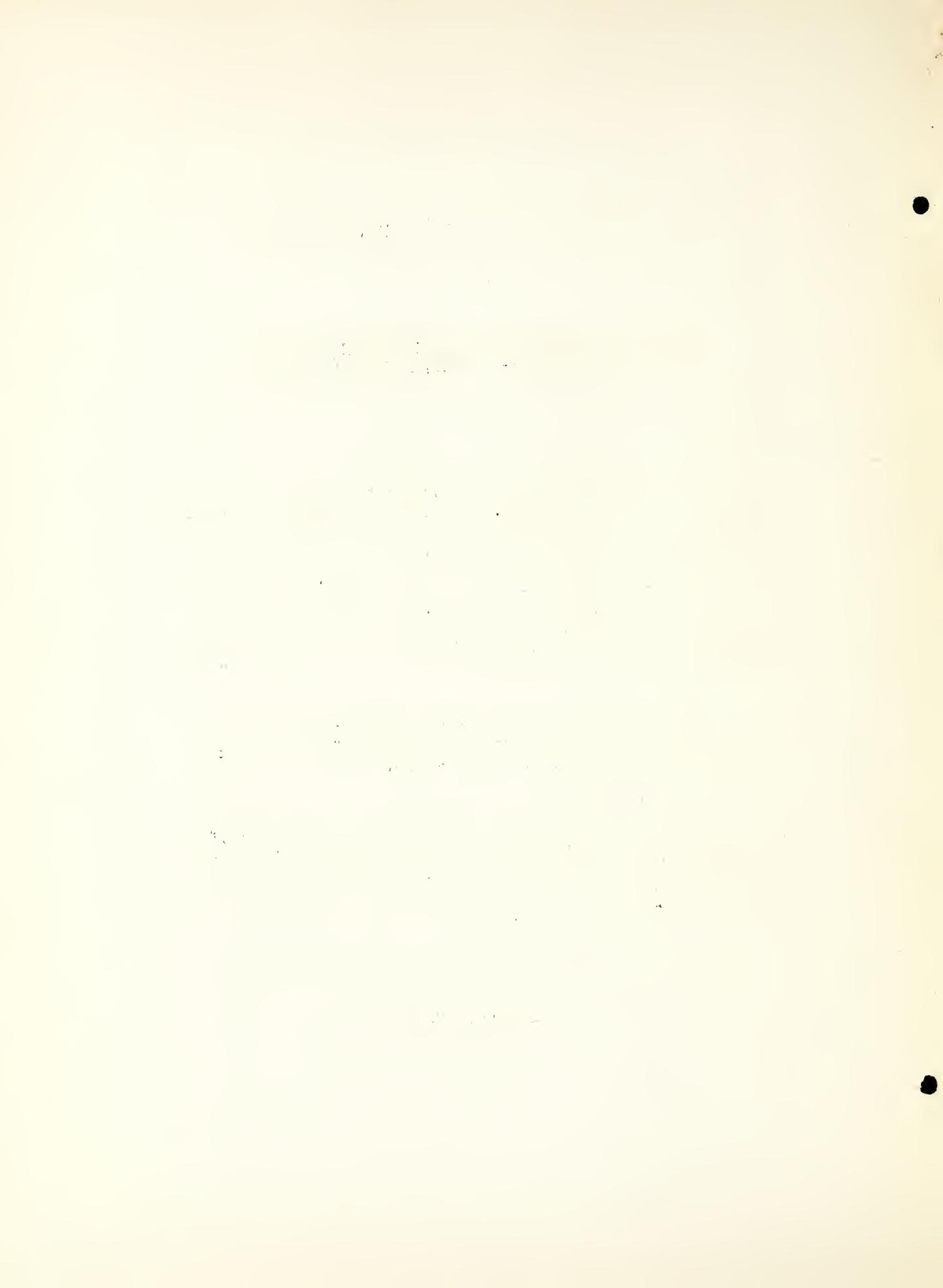
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February, 1935.



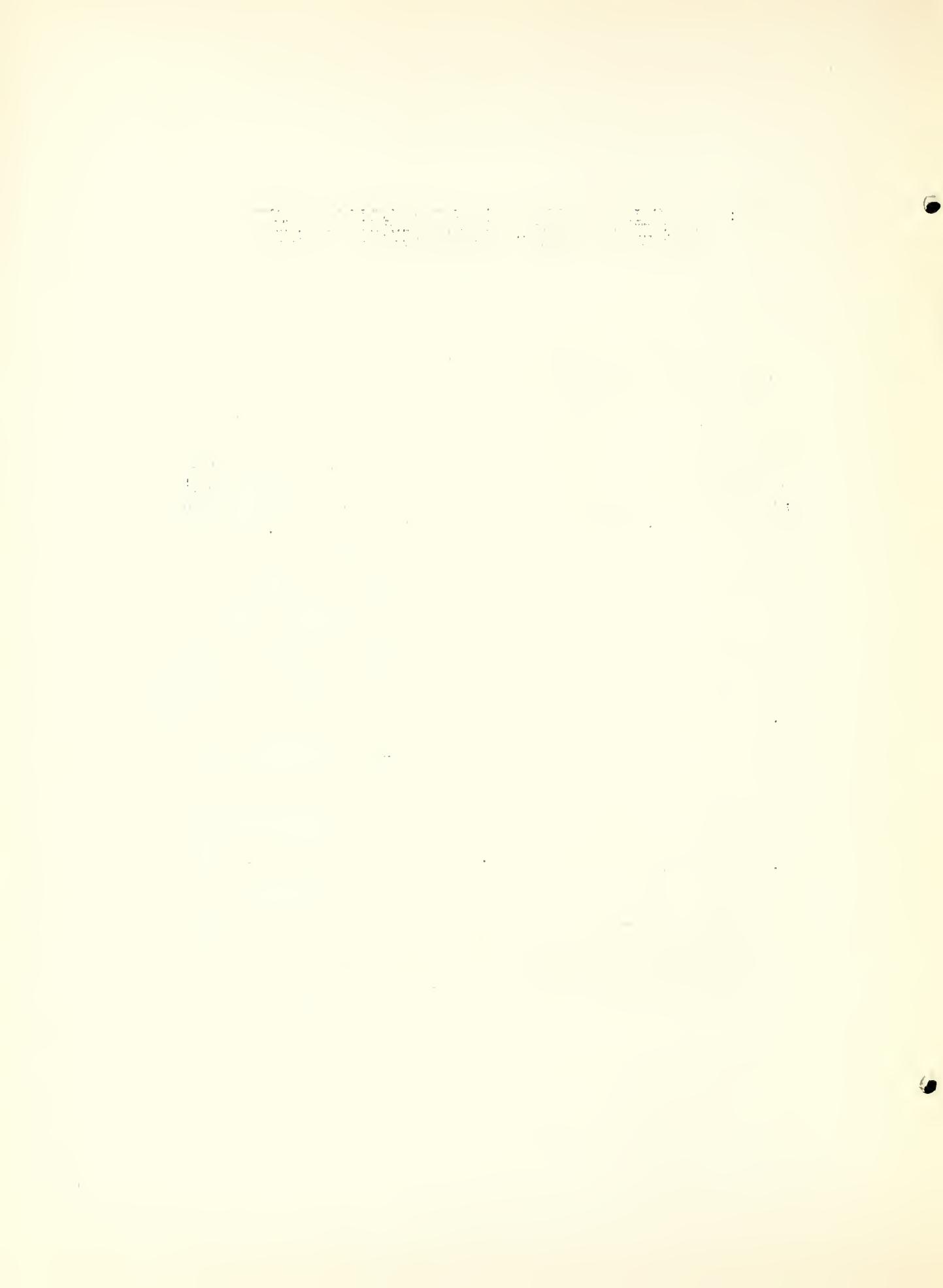
Topic: IS IT IN THE INTEREST OF THE NATION TO HAVE  
MORE -- OR FEWER -- PEOPLE LIVING ON LAND?

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With the development of machinery and the rise of science and invention, a smaller and smaller proportion of the people have been dependent on tilling the land for a living. For many years prior to 1929, the United States had a heavy and probably almost continuous net migration of people from country to city. Since 1929, with the rise of unemployment, many people have gone "back to the land," and more people, mostly youth, have been backed up on farms because of inability to obtain work in the cities.

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1. SHOULD THIS NATION ENCOURAGE A LARGER RURAL POPULATION?
2. CAN MORE PEOPLE BE SUPPORTED BY COMMERCIAL FARMING?
3. CAN MORE PEOPLE BE SUPPORTED IN CITIES?
4. SHOULD THE UNEMPLOYED IN THE CITIES BE ENCOURAGED TO SETTLE ON FARMS?
5. SHOULD FARM BOYS AND GIRLS BE ENCOURAGED TO PLAN CITY CAREERS?
6. DOES A COMBINATION OF RURAL LIVING AND INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT, OR PART-TIME FARMING AND PART-TIME INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT, OFFER A PARTIAL SOLUTION TO OUR UNEMPLOYMENT AND POPULATION PROBLEMS?



## SOME PROS AND CONS

### I

#### A. A Large and Slowly Growing National Population is Needed

"There should be a large and slowly increasing national population. Farmers' markets depend principally upon the number of mouths to feed. City people are not reproducing themselves, and unless there is migration from the farms or from Europe will soon decline in number. Therefore, we should have a large farm population, with fairly large families on the land, so that farmers can send some of their sons and daughters to the cities, to maintain the urban population. Thus the welfare of farmers as well as of the nation depends upon our having a large population on the land.

"Only by having many fairly large farm families can we be assured of the quality of our future national population, because in the cities the more ambitious, intelligent, and capable people, notably the professional, business and clerical classes, generally have very small families while the large families occur among the least capable. On the farm the more capable people have almost as many children as the less capable. So important is this matter of the quality of the population that we may be justified in subsidizing agriculture or parenthood on farms. Furthermore, the cities should pay a good part of the costs of rural schools, health and recreation facilities, because many farm boys and girls eventually go to live in the urban places."

#### B. The Present National Population is Too Large

"We do not need a big national population. What we need are high standards of living in country and city, with plenty of leisure, and enough money to permit each family to travel and to give the children a higher education. Farm families should aim for a high standard of living, with as many mechanical conveniences and cultural opportunities as city families have. Fewer people in the nation would permit a higher standard of living.

"Life on the farm is inferior to city life. It is in the cities that we have the best schools, the best doctors, the best facilities for recreation and leisure. Farmers should demand a standard of living, and social services equal to the best, and should be willing to fight until their demands are secured."



II

A. There are Too Many Farmers

"There are already too many farmers. Farmers now compete keenly with one another for the markets that are available. Our farmers could produce much more if prices were fair and markets were better. We need fewer, not more farm families. Furthermore, the market for farm products is more limited than that for industrial products. Urban industry can produce the products for which there is an opportunity to expand markets."

"Because of this condition, urban unemployed should be kept in the cities. There is more wealth and income in the cities than in the country. Let the cities buy food for their own unemployed. Unemployed industrial workers should not be encouraged to come out to the country and compete with the farmers. Moreover, if the unemployed do come to the country in large numbers, they will only add to the burden farmers are carrying. The children of the unemployed must be educated and often they and their parents must be fed."

B. Unemployed City People Should go Back to the Land

"Many of our cities cannot provide in the future the employment they have in the past. Some of their unemployed are going back to the land, no matter who likes it or doesn't like it. Labor-saving devices are continuing to displace workers in trade and industry. Moreover, the unemployed are growing older and city industries will not hire many of them because of age."

"Relief costs can be reduced by placing part of the unemployed industrial workers on the land. This will enable them to raise some produce and contribute something to their own support. Such work will add to their self-respect. Their children will grow up under a better environment than they would in the cities. These unemployed people should be able to develop local industries in the country, and their gardening and poultry raising would not compete noticeably with the products of commercial farmers."

III

A. Industry Should be Further Decentralized

"We need to decentralize industry. Industries generally should be encouraged to locate at points where labor is cheap and also, if possible, close to the sources of raw materials. This would result in lowering production and distribution costs."



"A decentralized industry would make our economic life more stable. It would probably result in a new type of a community, part farming, part industrial. And there would be greater security in such a community than we now generally have. Moreover, rural workers who own their homes and are more or less dependent upon a local industry for their livelihood are less likely to develop militant labor organizations."

IV

B. Industrial Deconatralization is Inadvisable

"The idea of decentralizing industry is pretty much of a pipe dream. Corporations cannot afford to sacrifice their heavy investments in city factories. Some industries, such as steel mills, simply cannot decentralize, no matter how much people may want them to do so. There is no evidence that industry has decentralized to any great extent. This would appear to indicate that there is not much advantage to industry in doing so."

"On the other hand there are many advantages to urban industry in concentrating their workers at one or a few points. Concentration reduces the costs of supervision, and permits mass production. Workers living in cities are likely to have more numerous and varied opportunities for employment than have workers living in rural areas. Moreover, since rural residents are more likely to own their homes, it is harder for them to move to another location if such a move is necessary in order to obtain employment. It is usually easier to organize labor in the cities for collective bargaining than is true when workers are scattered in many small plants distant from each other."



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Discussion Group Topic No. 3

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WHAT SHARE OF THE NATIONAL INCOME  
SHOULD FARMERS HAVE?

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February, 1935

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Topic: WHAT SHARE OF THE NATIONAL INCOME  
SHOULD FARMERS HAVE?

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Farmers exchange their own products for the products of factories, shops and mines. When farm prices are low in relation to other prices, then farm income and buying power decline. Many people have sought to work out formulas in regard to the share of the national income which farmers should have.

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1. WILL "PARITY PRICES" YIELD A FAIR SHARE OF THE NATIONAL INCOME TO FARMERS?
2. SHOULD FARMERS WORK TO RESTORE THE RATIO OF NATIONAL INCOME ("PARITY") THEY HAD DURING THE PRE-WAR PERIOD? OR WORK FOR A STILL LARGER SHARE OF THE NATIONAL INCOME?
3. WOULD FARMERS AS A GROUP BE BENEFITED GENERALLY BY MORE FLEXIBLE INDUSTRIAL PRICES?
4. DO FARMERS WANT BOTH FIXED FARM PRICES AND FIXED INDUSTRIAL PRICES?
5. WHAT METHODS SHOULD FARMERS USE TO SECURE A "FAIR SHARE" OF THE NATIONAL INCOME?
6. HOW MUCH CAN BE DONE BY VOLUNTARY EFFORTS? WHAT SHOULD BE THE FUNCTION OF THE GOVERNMENT?



## SOME PROS AND CONS

### I.

"Restore to farmers the share of the national income which they have usually had in the past. For example, in 1900, when about 36 percent of the working people of the nation lived on farms, the farm share of the national income was about 21 percent of the national income. In 1910 the percent of gainfully employed in agriculture was 32.5 and agriculture's share of the national income was 18.6 percent. In 1920 these percentages were 25.6 and 16.8. Today, when slightly less than 25 percent of our people are on farms, they should have at least 13 or 14 percent of the national income,--not around 10 percent, their recently estimated share for the year 1934. This means that if the total national income increases farm income should increase more rapidly than other incomes."

### II.

"The past should not dictate for the present or the future. Past conditions have been unfair to farmers. Farmers are being forced to tax themselves heavily in order to provide schooling for some children who will be turned over to the cities. The cities now generally pay nothing for the education of those children. Future population relationships between farm and city may put upon agriculture even heavier burdens. Let's get away from the ratio of the past and think in terms of the future, on a new basis."

### III.

"Let 'natural forces' operate and things will work out in the end. We have too much interference with natural forces already. Competition, shifts in population, and in cropping systems, all tend to maintain balance. You get the most lasting solution when you don't try to plan things. If farm income swings too low for a period, don't worry about it. It will swing back again, and farmers will be better satisfied."



IV.

"The government must fix both farm prices and non-farm prices, in order to assure a fair share of the national income for farmers. As things are now, farm prices are elastic; they bounce up and down. Industrial prices are comparatively inelastic. Prices paid farmers sink low; most prices farmers have to pay stay high. Because industry won't produce unless prices are satisfactory, something must be done to make farm prices rigid and high enough to get a fair share of the national income. Only the government can tackle a job as big as this."

V.

"Guarantee farmers the cost of production, plus a fair profit, and all these questions about the share of the national income that should go to farmers will take care of themselves. The farmer given cost of production prices, will have removed his chief incentive for excessive production. Farm income will thus be increased, farm purchasing power boosted and an outlet provided for the products of city factories, shops, labor and capital. The 'other fellow' always has had cost of production--why shouldn't the farmer?"

VI.

"Price-raising devices in behalf of farmers have very definite limitations. They may prove to be a boomerang. The prosperity of farmers--and their share of the national income--depends on the purchasing power of the consumer of farm products. Agriculture must concern itself with the level of urban purchasing power and employment. Beyond a certain point, it is not possible to offset declining sales by higher prices. It is a mistake to consider the surplus problem solved merely by the elimination of tangible surpluses. From the standpoint of society as a whole, surpluses of labor and capital are just as troublesome as surpluses of goods. They may be more troublesome, for idle labor must be maintained at public expense and idle capital tends to be dissipated and lost. In the long run, it is neither legitimate nor efficient to establish a balance resting on scarcity. Such a balance cannot be maintained. The resulting high prices break the situation down by reducing consumption and at the same time fostering production. The only balance that can be maintained is balanced abundance."



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Chase Economic Bulletin 11 (3):1-16. June 12,  
1931. Free  
In the section entitled, The Unbalanced  
Factors, he enumerates 5 causes of the depression  
including the unbalanced prices. He says, "There  
have been violent breaks in prices for raw ma-  
terials and farm products, whereas finished  
manufactures have fallen much more moderately.  
The result is such a curtailment of the buying  
power of agricultural and raw material producers  
that they cannot buy their share, even of the  
sharply reduced manufacturing output, at pre-  
vailing prices."

In the section entitled, Wages and Buying  
Power he gives figures for farm wages and in-  
cludes a table showing Indices of money wages



and real wages in the United States, for all industrial, railroad, and agricultural wages, Dec. 1928 to Mar. 1931.

Black, J. D.

- Agricultural Reform in the United States. 511 pp. New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1929. \$4.00  
Chapter II, The place of agriculture in the national economy, discusses the rural-urban balance in the United States; The rural-urban balance abroad; Agricultural policy; and, Objectives.

Donham, W. B.

- Business Looks at the Unforeseen. 209 pp. New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1932. \$2.50

In his chapter entitled, Social Evolution and Economic Planning; The Philosophic Basis of Planning, Mr. Donham says, "Waiting for the simple economic forces of supply and demand to restore equilibrium means readjusting wages and prices of manufactured products to substantially the present level of prices of raw materials and agricultural products. Such continued deflation will make intolerable the burden of debts and fixed money obligations in general; and if these obligations are to be scaled down to correspond with the new level of prices, we shall have such a holocaust of bankruptcies and receiverships and bank and insurance company failures as will destroy our progress for a generation and confront our democracy with far graver social problems than it has ever before faced. If we embark on this economic philosophy, we should do it consciously after consideration of the forced redistribution of wealth that it carries with it..."

"The broad truth is that our American society has developed to a point where it is very dangerous to rely on the simple forces contemplated by much of nineteenth century economic theory to restore economic equilibrium in conditions like the present." - pp.43-44.

In his chapter entitled, The Lost Customers of American Business, a section is devoted to The Farmers.- pp.136-164. He emphasizes the need of the business men helping in the solution of the farm problem, the need of parity between domestic crop prices and industrial prices, the value of business property devoted to agriculture, says that any solution of the farm problem should raise farm prices, etc. "The farmer should be as much interested in the prosperity of industry as industry should be in the rehabilitation of the farmer. The present tension between the two



groups should disappear through constructive remedies supported by both." To quote further, "It should be realized fully by our industrial leaders as well as by our farmers, that until the readjustment of farm conditions is accomplished, we shall either be oppressed by the weight of over a fifth of our population living at a subsistence level in practical bankruptcy, or through tariff tinkering we shall reduce the standards of living of our industrial communities to something like an equal level. Farmers at a subsistence level cease to be customers for anything but sheer necessities, and our mass production industries are an essential part of our economic framework. Their prosperity depends on high economic standards of living widely distributed over our population."

The book also has a chapter entitled, Government and Business Must Cooperate - Central Thinking. - pp.59-64.

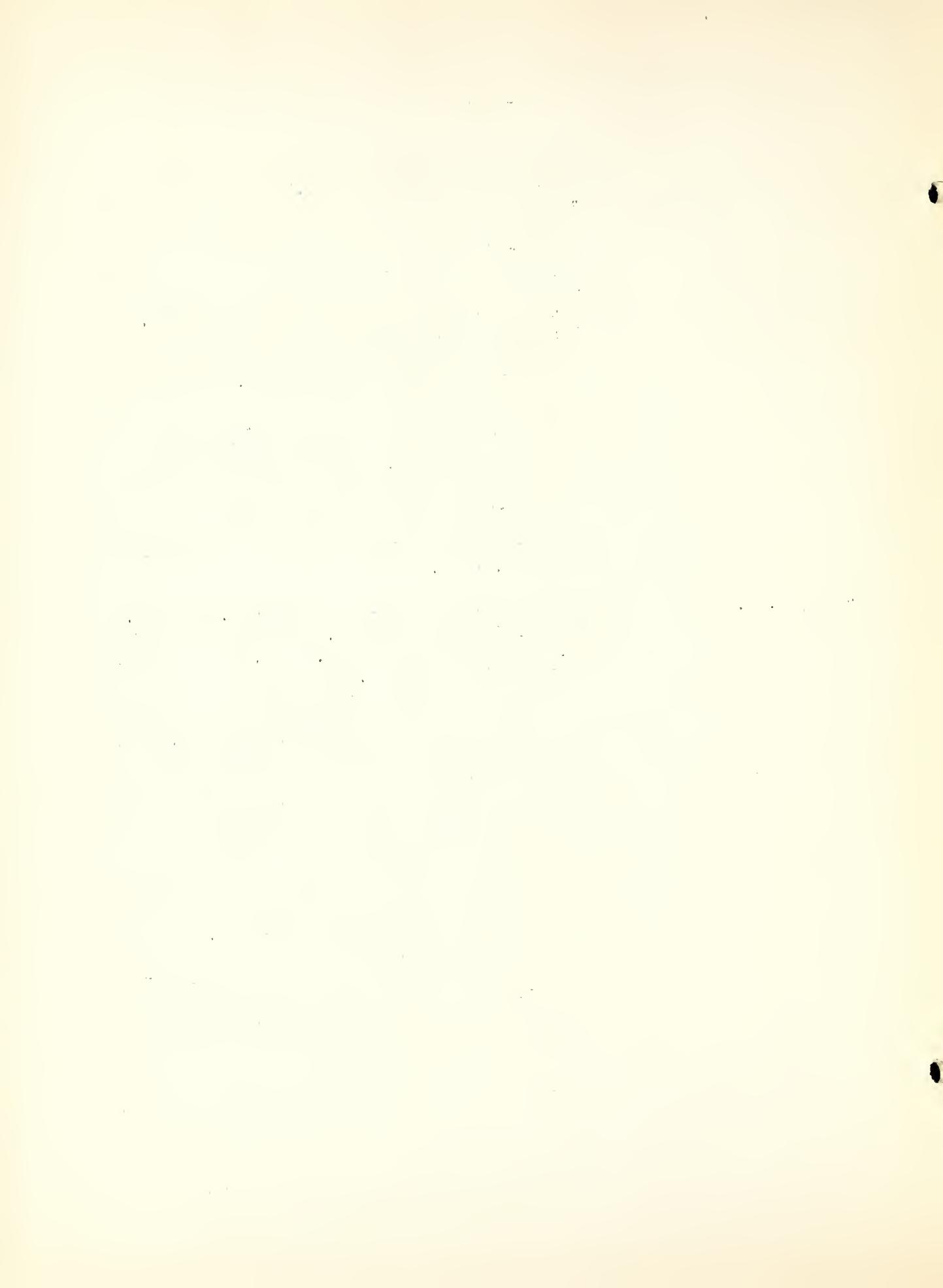
Engberg, R. C.

- Industrial Prosperity and the Farmer. 286 pp.  
New York, The Macmillan Co., 1927. (Inst. of  
Econ. Investigations in Agr. Econ.) \$2.50

"In this volume Mr. Engberg, who possesses a thorough knowledge of the technical phases of farm organization and management has assembled the data necessary to test, both analytically and statistically, the effects of industrial changes upon agriculture. He examines the effects of industrial prosperity and depression upon the demand for and price of farm products, and upon the farmer's operating costs. The analysis establishes certain definite conclusions with reference to a phase of agricultural organization and farm management which has heretofore been merely a subject of speculation." - Director's preface.

The author asks and discusses the answers to the three questions which follow: (1) to what extent are business cycles responsible for the farmer's financial difficulties (2) is it worth while for farmers to attempt to adjust their production policies to changes in demand or costs predicted on business forecasts and (3) are the remedies suggested for business cycles likely to prove effective in stabilizing agricultural production and prices?

Special chapters are devoted to cotton, the corn-hog industry, and wheat.



Tugwell, Rexford Guy,  
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- Our Economic Society and Its Problems.-

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Company, 1934.

\$2.50

Chapter 17. Balancing agriculture and  
industry.

U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, -Achieving a Balanced Agriculture. 52 pp.  
Agricultural Adjustment  
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Washington, D. C., 1934. (G 20)

Free

May be procured from the Division of In-  
formation, Agricultural Adjustment Administra-  
tion, United States Department of Agriculture,  
Washington, D. C.



Discussion Group Topic No. 4

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SHOULD FARM PRODUCTION BE CONTROLLED  
AS A LONG-TIME POLICY?

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The attention of discussion leaders and others is called particularly to the availability of "Discussion: A Brief Guide to Methods." This contains practical suggestions and information.

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February, 1935

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Topic: SHOULD FARM PRODUCTION BE CONTROLLED  
AS A LONG-TIME POLICY?

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An emergency program of crop adjustment to effective demand is being carried out under the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933. No policies projecting far into the future have been fixed but many have been mentioned.

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1. IF WE ARE TO FOLLOW THE WORLD'S NATIONALISTIC TREND, ("AMERICA FOR AMERICANS"), DOES IT FOLLOW THAT WE MUST LIMIT AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION? WHAT CAN BE DONE TOWARD INCREASING EFFECTIVE (OR PAYING) DEMAND FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS HERE IN THE UNITED STATES?
2. WHAT ARE THE CHANCES OF REOPENING FOREIGN MARKETS FOR PRODUCTS OF THE SOME 50 MILLION ACRES OF LAND THAT WE USED TO FARM FOR EXPORT?
3. SHOULD FARMERS BE GUARANTEED "COST OF PRODUCTION"?
4. WILL THE TIME EVER COME WHEN FARM PRODUCTION CAN BE REGULATED BY COOPERATIVE ORGANIZATION, OR MUST IT ALWAYS BE DONE BY GOVERNMENTAL ASSISTANCE?
5. IF WE MUST BECOME NATIONALISTIC AND THUS PERMANENTLY REDUCE THE PRODUCTION OF EXPORT CROPS, SHOULD WE TRY TO GROW RUBBER, TEA SUBSTITUTES, AND OTHER THINGS NOT NOW GROWN?
6. IF A LONG-TIME POLICY OF NON-CONTROL SHOULD BE ADOPTED FOR AGRICULTURE, SHOULD ALL CONTROLS BE ELIMINATED WITH RESPECT TO INDUSTRY, LABOR AND OTHER SEGMENTS OF OUR ECONOMY?
7. IF A LONG-TIME POLICY OF CROP CONTROL AND AGRICULTURAL ADJUSTMENT MUST BE ADOPTED, WHAT METHOD OF CONTROL SHOULD BE EMPLOYED -- VOLUNTARY OR COMPULSORY, BY FIXED PRICES, BENEFIT PAYMENTS, ETC.?



## SOME PROS AND CONS

### A. As to Control:

#### I.

"Continuous control will be necessary in order to assure fair farm prices and a proper adjustment of productive capacity to effective demand. It is hardly likely that industry will give up the controls which it has developed. Why should agriculture? In spite of crudities and disadvantages, agriculture now has demonstrated that it can control production. This in itself is an achievement. It should be given a long trial."

#### II.

"Control would not be necessary if we really restored our foreign markets. Let us concentrate on that task and all the controls can be abandoned. Farmers really do not like control. They would rather produce than withhold production. International cooperation, to get heavy foreign trade, will enable farmers to do away with methods they do not like."

#### III.

"As long as people are hungry and poorly clad in this country and throughout the world, not one acre should be taken out of production. What we need is to enlarge consuming power and create an efficient system of distribution. Not until we achieve that task do we need to talk about crop adjustment. It is a cruel and wicked policy to restrict farm production in the present circumstances."

#### IV.

"Farmers should be guaranteed cost of production, plus a fair profit, by the government. This is a policy which is more in the public interest than one of controlling farm production. A guarantee of cost of production, plus a fair profit, would considerably improve the purchasing power of the farm community. It would only be assuring to farmers what many industries say they must have in order to produce. Why not put farmers on an equal basis with those industries?"



V.

"Give the chemists a real chance and they will so increase new demands for farm products that no production control program will be needed. Already the chemists are finding new industrial uses for farm products. The possibilities are great because the industrial use of farm products is not limited by the human stomach.

"Here are a few examples. In the Old World they are running their motors in part with fuels grown and not mined. They are also developing new fabrics, part cotton, part wood-pulp. In the United States we are making steering wheels and other auto parts out of products derived from cellulose. Cellulose, produced in grasses and trees, is today a richer mine of possibilities than were crude oil or coal tars twenty years ago."

VI.

"The chemists are over-emphasizing their own contribution to agriculture. They simply see things from their own corner, as do other specialists. Industrial uses of grain products have been considerably developed in this country, without much effect on the price of cereals. The use of cotton is not limited by the "inelastic human stomach," yet production control had to be brought in to get the price above five cents a pound.

"The industrial user of farm products only takes part of the crop and is not concerned about the other part. He controls his output. So must the producer of raw materials control his own output, if he is to have markets that pay fair returns."



B. As to Methods of Control:

I.

"Continue the voluntary methods which the Agricultural Adjustment Administration has developed. They are American methods, worked out with due regard to our history and institutions. They place much emphasis on voluntary efforts and combine these voluntary procedures with government guidance and supervision. Furthermore, the methods of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration are flexible. They permit the producers to take part in the process. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration is an important step toward economic democracy. Agriculture is thus making an important demonstration which should be carried on."

II.

"Production control methods should be worked out which make it necessary that all producers of a commodity cooperate. The non-cooperator should be compelled to come along with the large majority, rather than getting advantages without putting forth any effort or working along with his fellows. Therefore, the producers of any given commodity should have the power to establish by vote a plan to which all producers must subscribe. Only in this way can effective control in the long run be established."

III.

"Quotas should be worked out and enforced by the government for each farm. Individual farmers should be licensed in order to achieve production control. A combination of individual quotas, with a guarantee of cost of production, would be effective."

IV.

"The government should buy about 50 million acres of good farm land or 100 million acres of poor farm land. This would make unnecessary further control. Prices of the various farm products produced on the remaining acreage would bring about a rough balance between different crops."



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Wilson, M. L. and Tolley, H.R. Some Future Problems of Agricultural Adjustment. Washington, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Mimeoographed 1934. Free



Academy of Political Science. Can prices, production and employment be effectively regulated? 148pp. New York, 1932. (Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science, v. 14, no. 4, Jan. 1932) \$1.00

Contains an article by E. G. Nourse (pp. 65-75) on Can Agriculture Affect Prices by Controlling Production? The writer concludes the article as follows:

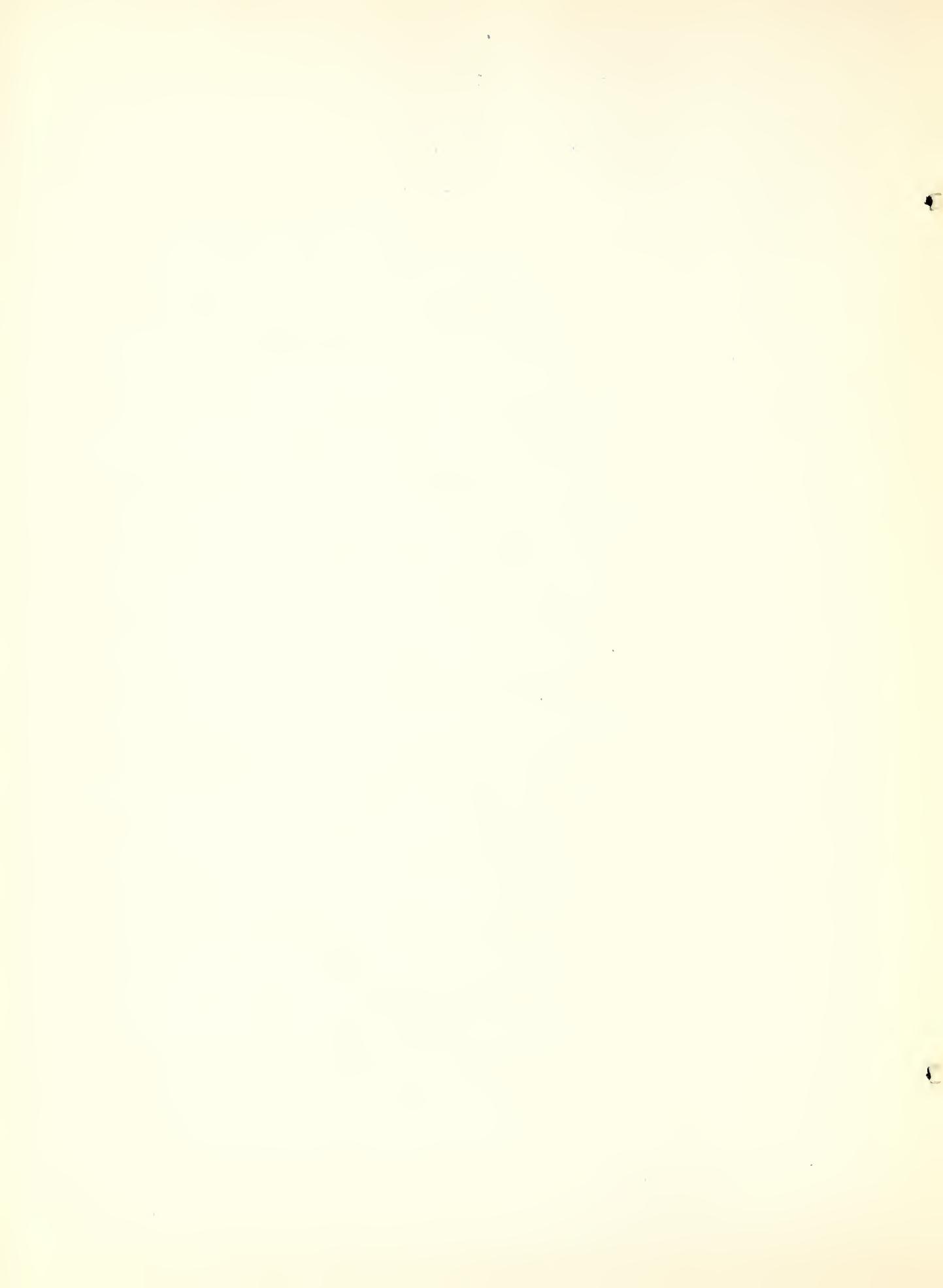
"It is but natural that, in such an extraordinary period of emergency readjustments as have been thrust upon us in the past decade, many minds should dally with the possibilities of omniscient and omnipotent economic direction which would cure or mitigate these ills with great rapidity. I would hazard as my guess, however, that we shall in the end settle down to a continued reliance upon freedom of enterprise in agriculture, coupled with stronger emphasis and increased effort along educational lines in order that these individual decisions may be made as wisely as possible. I fancy also that in the regulative sphere we shall, in terms of coöperative organization, credit extension and land institutions, make numerous modifications which will have some influence toward preventing the widest kind of aberrations of individual economic effort from the economic center of gravity. Under ordinary economic conditions such an institutional system will produce probably the most satisfactory results, and it is too much to expect that any set of agricultural institutions could guard against the difficulties of the crises which come occasionally in human affairs."

Agricultural readjustment in the South: cotton and tobacco. Law and Contemporary Problems 1(3): 257-397. June 1934. (Published by the Duke University School of Law, Durham, N.C.) 60¢

The Bankhead experiment, by Paul J. Kern, pp. 363-372. In defense of the Bankhead Act, by G. W. Forster, pp. 373-375.

The following is quoted from p. 372:

"Until proof is presented that there is a social, as contrasted with a price, overproduction of cotton, it is dangerous from a social standpoint to restrict production. As a matter of fact, until an exhaustive survey is made to determine the proper per capita consumption of cotton from a social standpoint, it is impossible and unfair to attempt to adopt a sound system of national production control. Such survey should be an immediate prerequisite to further efforts at national economic planning. Even the price system can be sublimated to social use, through the employment of government credit, if there is a definite and certain knowledge of the proper social demand. Until such a step is taken - the next logical step - it is impossible to be wholly enthusiastic about present unscientific measures, salutary though they may be as pioneers of a planned economy."



America's crop control experiment. Congressional Digest 13(12): 289-315, 320. Dec. 1934. (Published at 2131 LeRoy Place, Washington, D.C.) 50¢

Contains "fact material" and pro and con discussion on the question, "Is the crop control experiment proving a success?" Fact material is as follows: Analysis of the problem with study outline; What Congress has done about farm relief since 1931; Conditions precipitating America's crop control experiment; The "A.A.A." and its work; Millions paid out by the "A.A.A." to date; Glossary of terms used in A.A.A. discussions; An analysis of the farm cutback for 1935; Pro and con discussion is by H. A. Wallace, Glenn Frank, Marvin Jones, Neil Carothers, C. C. Davis, Gustav Cassel, Mordecai Ezekiel, and Mrs. G. B. Simmons.

Dowell, A. A., and Jesness, O. B. The American farmer and the export market. 269pp. Minneapolis, The University of Minnesota Press, 1934. \$2.75

The following is quoted from the authors' preface.

"This book deals with present day economic nationalism in relation to American agriculture. It is an outgrowth of the authors' interest in the economic welfare and problems of the American farmer... Our aim has been to show the place of foreign markets in American agricultural trade and to consider the consequences of abandonment or drastic curtailment of these outlets. We have sought to marshal the facts relating to the questions and to employ sound economic reasoning in the interpretations that have been made."

For restriction of production see pp. 3, 5, 6, 67, 101, 118-120, 155-160, 225-232, 243-246 and also related subjects.

The following is quoted from pp. 231-232:

"Economic nationalism and international trade both have their price. The best solution is the one that will give the greatest return in the long run.

"This fact should be recognized more generally in the development of the present agricultural adjustment program. The policy of paying farmers to let parts of their farms lie idle or at least to keep them out of direct production for market would in time tend to defeat its purpose; hence it can be accepted only as a temporary expedient, not as a permanent solution. Moreover, as a permanent program it is not good economy. To the extent that permanent curtailment may be necessary, it should be accomplished by removing the least efficient parts of the producing machine rather than by distributing the reduction without regard to productive efficiency. It is not a disparagement of the present adjustment program to call attention to its temporary nature. It is important that its limitations be recognized now in order that a more permanent program may not be delayed."

Frank, Glenn. The dynamics of recovery; with particular reference to agriculture. In Association of Land-grant Colleges and Universities. Proceedings, 47th annual convention, Chicago, Ill., Nov. 13-15, 1933, pp. 71-86. (Apply to the Secretary, T. P. Cooper, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky.)

"I am quite aware that slowing down production, temporarily and at certain spots in our economic order, may be unavoidable as a transition



measure in order to regain control of a situation that had got tragically out of hand, but I am convinced that the final way out of our difficulty will never lie in slowing down production but in speeding up consumption." -p. 75.

In connection with this paper see also Chester C. Davis' Production Control and Agricultural Recovery on pp. 100-103 of these proceedings.

Hibbard, B. H. Controlling agricultural production. In Institute of Public Affairs, Proceedings, 8th annual session. Athens, Ga., May 8-15, 1934, part I, pp. 151-157. (Published as Bulletin of the University of Georgia, v.34, no.11, Aug. 1934) \$1.50

"The ways to reduce production among a class of people as numerous, as scattered, and as resourceful as are American farmers, are apparently two: First, we may reduce crops as we reduced cotton and tobacco last year by plowing it up after it is partly grown, using a mild degree of compulsion on the one hand, and bringing in the other hand a sum of money as great as that to be hoped for from the crop under any circumstances. Second, remove temptation from the farmers by taking the surplus land out of their hands altogether. The first plan can succeed temporarily, and temporarily only. The second might succeed permanently but is slow medicine, and not easy to take. If this remedy is to be applied in a manner equal to the requirements of a cure, the patient must be allowed to get much sicker than he is now, or force will be required in administering the dose."-p.155.

"To come down to domestic requirements in agriculture, in mining and in manufacturing, means a degree of primitive self-sufficiency which is praised by those who know little about what it would mean, and who care little about the cost of such transition to those who would be called upon to make the sacrifice. In the past, especially during the more recent past, such as the nineteenth century, prosperity has gone hand in hand with abundance. Can we now turn the hands of the clock backward, and proclaim a prosperity based on scarcity? Are we to be deluded into believing that higher prices mean, surely and always, greater welfare?"-p.157.

Mclyneaux, Peter. What economic nationalism means to the South. 28pp. New York, Foreign Policy Association and World Peace Foundation, 1934. (World Affairs Pamphlets No. 4) 25¢



Discussion Group Topic No. 5

WHAT KIND OF LAND POLICIES  
SHOULD THE NATION HAVE?

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February, 1935.



Topic: WHAT KIND OF LAND POLICIES SHOULD THE NATION HAVE?

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The surface land area of the continental United States is just short of two billion acres. Less than 52 percent of this land has ever been devoted to farming in any way. Less than 22 percent has ever been in harvested crops during any one year. There are nevertheless practically no more good "free lands" such as those to which many pioneers moved and acute problems of soil depletion and erosion are rapidly developing. Many American farm families find themselves living upon lands that fail year after year to yield them a decent standard of living.

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1. WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH THE APPROXIMATELY ONE BILLION ACRES OF LANDS IN THE UNITED STATES NOT NEEDED FOR FARM PRODUCTION?
2. WHY IS FARM ABANDONMENT SO PREVILENT IN SOME AREAS OF THE NATION?
3. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE GOVERNMENT TOOK OVER ALL LANDS AND LEASED THEM TO FAMILIES ON LONG TERM LEASES?
4. WHICH IS WORSE; TO HAVE FAMILIES LIVING IN CITY SLUMS OR LIVING ON SUBMARGINAL LANDS?
5. IF THE GOVERNMENT BUYS SUBMARGINAL FARMS WHAT SHALL IT DO WITH THE FAMILIES NOW LIVING ON THESE FARMS?
6. WILL GOVERNMENT PURCHASE OF SUBMARGINAL LANDS TEND TO ELIMINATE THE ONLY REMAINING REFUGE OF PROPERTYLESS FAMILIES WHO CANNOT AFFORD TO BUY GOOD LANDS OR OBTAIN CITY EMPLOYMENT?



## SOME PROS AND CONS

### I.

"Land planning is the last thing the nation should attempt. Free and unrestricted ownership and management of land by millions of families is the chief cause of the nation's unique place among the nations of the world. To temper with the individual's right to do as he pleases with his land is to temper with the heart of America's genius as a civilization. Of course, lands have been abused in this country, but to enforce any system of governmental regulations on the free use of lands would be more damaging than to wait for individuals to learn that it is to their own self interest to conserve their land resources."

### II.

"Lands are the nation's greatest and most valuable national resource. Land is the basic heritage of all people. Individual ownership of farms, no matter how widely distributed, tends toward unjustifiable and harmful monopoly of lands. Land speculation, rural slums, and rural family insecurity can be eliminated only by the government owning all lands. So long as individual ownership prevails speculation in land values will continue, and so long as speculation in farm lands continues, farmers whether tenants or owners will continue to exploit and abuse soils and farmers will spend net cash incomes in buying more land rather than in improving the standard of living of their families."



III.

"While it is true that the right and opportunity of individual farm ownership is the last stronghold of old-fashioned Americanism and something that should be preserved, our lack of a constructive public land policy in the past has so exploited and even abused our lands that states and the Federal Government should furnish not only elaborate education on land use, but should spend considerable money in placing our lands in order. Flood control, erosion control, the taking of submarginal lands out of cultivation and even the zoning of areas for specific uses by counties, states and the Federal Government are necessary in order that the lands of the nation may be placed to their best use and conserved for future generations."

IV.

The chief thing needed in land policy is a graduated land tax to head off land monopoly and absentee ownership. A graduated tax should be applied to all holdings over a certain size, or to absentee ownership. This would permit large holdings which are economically sound on the basis of mechanized farming carried on by a family. Australia, and especially New Zealand have followed this program to good effect. Since the World War some other nations have adopted it.



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15. Making the Best Use of Wisconsin Land through Zoning. Madison, Agricultural Extension Service, Wisconsin College of Agriculture. Special Bulletin, 1934.



Discussion Group Topic No. 6

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THE FARMER AND THE CONSUMER OF FARM PRODUCTS --  
WHAT, IF ANY, ARE THEIR OBLIGATIONS TO ONE ANOTHER?

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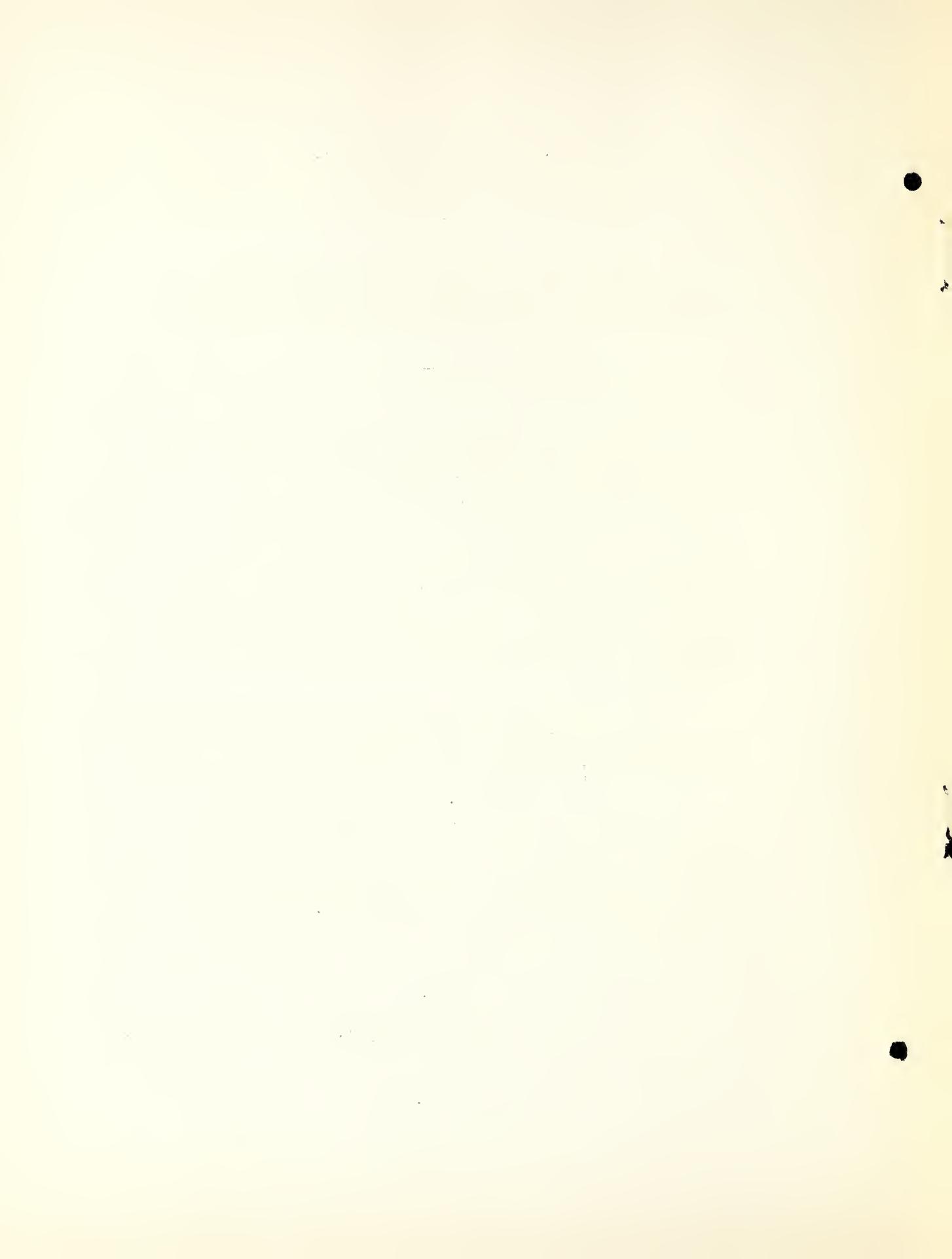
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February, 1935.

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Topic: THE FARMER AND THE CONSUMER OF FARM PRODUCTS--  
WHAT, IF ANY, ARE THEIR OBLIGATIONS TO ONE ANOTHER?

When prices of farm products are very low, the bread lines in the cities are said to be very long. Unemployed families do not consume many steaks. Farmers getting 30 cents a bushel for wheat do not buy many new radios. To what extent are farmers dependent on the size of the payrolls of factories? To what extent are industrial workers dependent upon consuming power among farm families?

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1. ARE PROCESSING TAXES JUSTIFIED AT A TIME WHEN THE INCOMES OF MANY CONSUMERS OF FARM PRODUCTS ARE VERY LOW?
2. IS THERE A CONFLICT BETWEEN THE INTERESTS OF THE CONSUMER AND THE FARM PROGRAMS?
3. SHOULD FARMERS IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD FAVOR FAIR INDUSTRIAL WAGES AND GOOD WORKING CONDITIONS IN FACTORIES LOCATED IN CITIES A HUNDRED, OR EVEN A THOUSAND, MILES AWAY?
4. HOW CAN BOTH FARMERS AND CITY PEOPLE GET THE FAIREST DEAL AS CONSUMERS?
5. SHOULD FARMERS FAVOR OR DISAPPROVE ACCURATE LABELS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR ALL PRODUCTS AND GOODS?
6. SHOULD CONSUMERS ORGANIZE TO SECURE THEIR MUTUAL INTERESTS?



## SOME PROS AND CONS

### I.

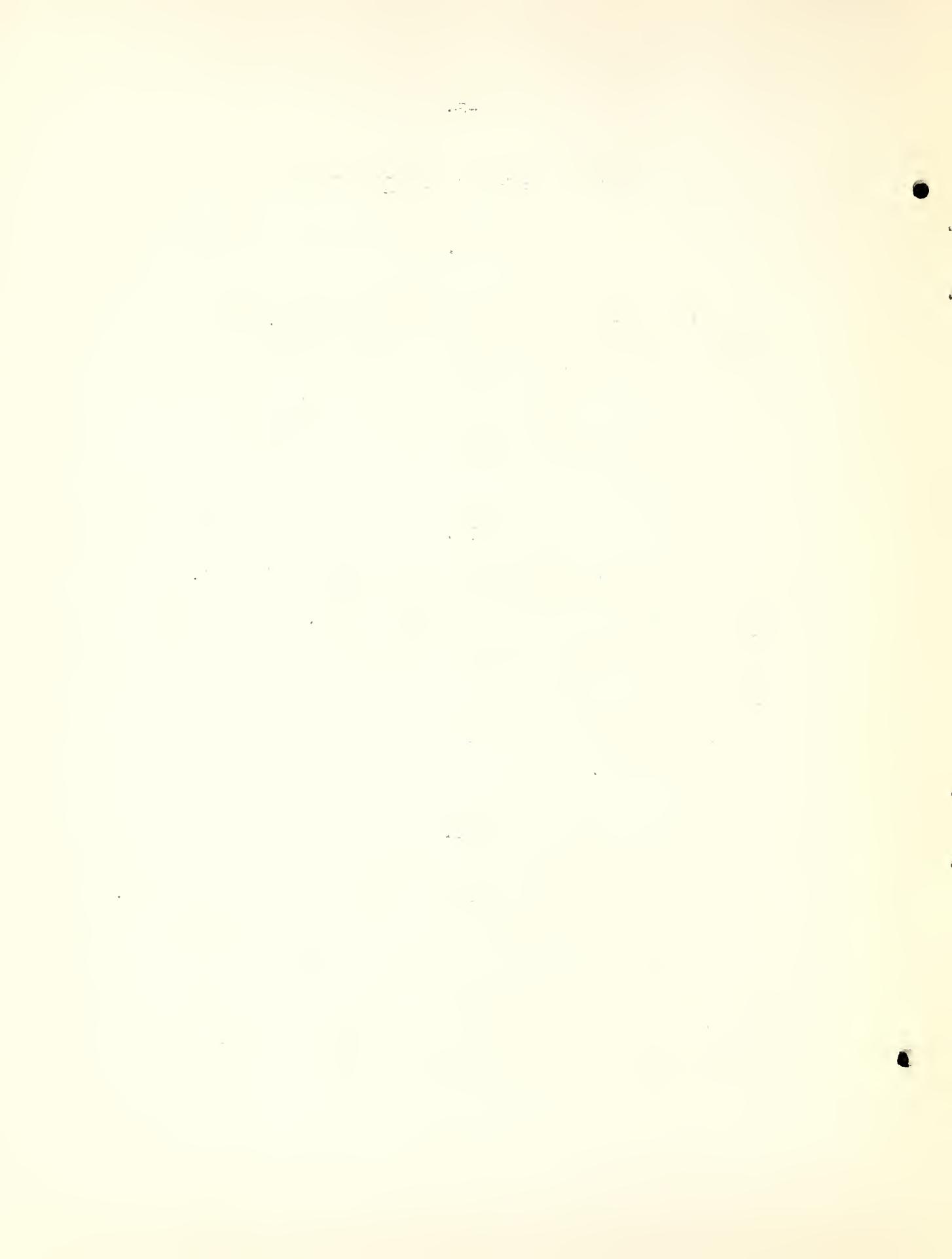
"The farmers should have "parity prices", but consumers should be vigorously protected in order that they will not be gouged or exploited. Frequently, a change in farm prices means much less of a change to consumers because farmers may be ordinarily getting a small share of the consumer's dollar. For instance, it is possible to increase the price to the farmer 50 percent of some products without increasing the price of the finished product to the consumer more than 10 percent".

### II.

"Farmers and consumers are both getting 'gyped'. We need both producer cooperatives and consumer cooperatives. These two should then deal with one another. The advantages of the cooperative are that democratic methods are used and both the consumer and the farmer have more of a chance of getting a square deal by dealing directly with one another. Both in Denmark and England this type of cooperation has been practised successfully. Economics have been achieved of benefit to both producers and consumers by reducing spreads in their prices".

### III.

"There is no hope of doing much until the government gets into the distribution process. There should be a governmental marketing corporation which will see that farmers get fair prices for their crops and that consumers are supplied with the necessities of life at fair prices. The necessity for profits would be removed. Distribution costs would be more flexible, reflecting actual handling and processing costs. The temptation with private handling and processing of farm products is to increase spreads - and profits - at every opportunity instead of making service at the lowest possible cost to the consumer as the primary consideration".



IV.

"Consumers should have much more protection from the government than they are now getting. The government should enforce accurate labeling on products, and should be empowered to control false claims in advertising of foods and drugs. The government should stay out of the distribution business as a participant but it should follow a vigorous regulatory policy. It should lay emphasis on quality as well as low prices to consumers".

V.

"Consumers should not have any protection from government. They should learn how to take care of themselves. The ordinary processes of education should be relied upon to protect consumers. The consumers don't have to buy from any particular individual or firm. The consumer will buy from the concern which will give him the lowest prices and the best quality. Thus, through competition the purposes of the consumer will best be served. The farmer with the highest quality products also stands to receive the most satisfactory prices under this system."



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Contents: Chapter I, The 1935 corn-hog adjustment program; Chapter II, Corn-hog adjustment in 1933-34-a review; Chapter III, The processing taxes; Chapter IV, The "why" of the corn-hog program.

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"This publication is intended to give a brief summary of the pertinent economic facts in the wheat situation of the United States and of the world. It incorporates a review of the 1933-35 wheat program, as that program relates to the current wheat situation, and the future of wheat production adjustment." -p.III.



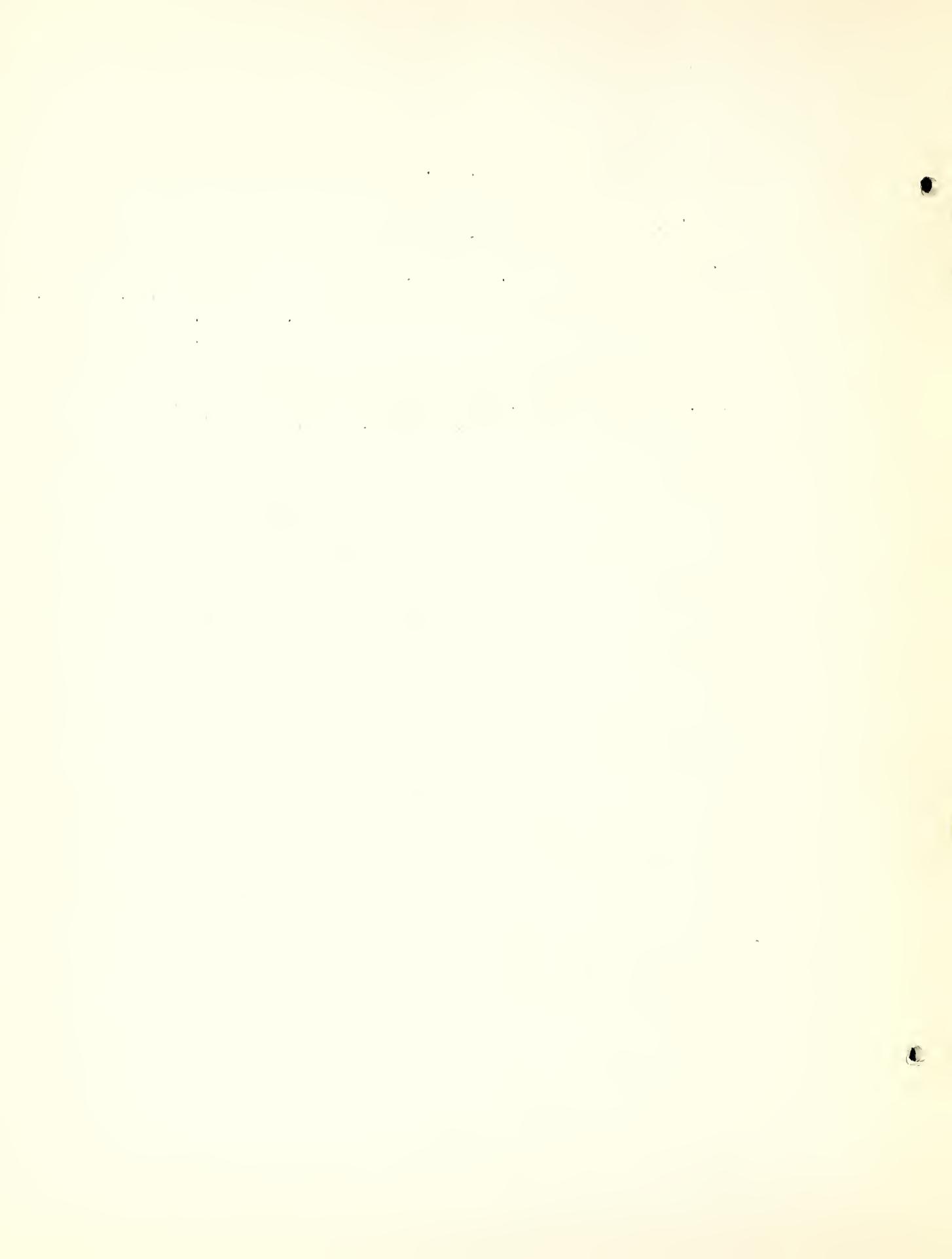
Financing the program, pp. 11-13; Determining the rate of the processing tax, pp. 13-14; Consumers' interest in the wheat program, pp. 16-17; Food supply, pp. 17-18; Price of bread, pp. 18-19.

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Discussion Group Topic No. 7

WHAT KIND OF A RURAL LIFE CAN WE LOOK  
FORWARD TO IN THE UNITED STATES?

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The attention of discussion leaders and others is called particularly to the availability of "Discussion: A Brief Guide to Methods." This contains practical suggestions and information.

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February, 1935.



WHAT KIND OF RURAL LIFE CAN WE LOOK  
FORWARD TO IN THE UNITED STATES?

American rural life of the past has been unique because of our rich national land resources, because other nations were anxious to buy our farm products, our extensive use of science and machines in farm production, and because farm ownership could be easily accomplished. At the present time some of our lands are exhausted, foreign demands for our farm products have declined and for the first time in our history hundreds of thousands of rural families are receiving public charity. Our rural life of the future will probably be considerably different from what it has been in the past.

1. ARE THERE VALUES IN RURAL MODES OF LIFE SO DISTINCT FROM URBAN MODES OF LIFE THAT THEY SHOULD AT ALL COSTS BE CONSERVED AND FOSTERED BY THE NATION?
2. IS THERE ANY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT AMERICAN RURAL LIFE CAN FOREVER BE MADE SUPERIOR TO THE PLEASANT LIFE OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES?
3. CAN WE HAVE THE KIND OF RURAL LIFE WE WANT IN THE UNITED STATES WITHOUT HAVING SOMETHING APPROACHING 100 PERCENT FARM HOME OWNERSHIP?
4. IF CONTINUED PROGRESS IS MADE IN THE COMMERCIALIZATION AND MECHANIZATION OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURE WILL IT RESULT IN THE DECLINE OF AMERICAN FARM FAMILY LIFE?
5. SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT ENCOURAGE SMALL HOLDINGS, FAMILY-SIZED FARMS, AND DISCOURAGE LARGE-SCALE "INDUSTRIAL" FARMING, AS A MATTER OF PUBLIC POLICY?
6. CAN THE TREND TOWARD LARGE-SCALE EFFICIENCIES BE GOVERNED? HAVE WE ANY CHOICE AS TO THE FUTURE PATTERNS OF RURAL LIFE, OR WILL THEY BE, AS IN THE PAST, LARGELY DETERMINED BY ECONOMIC FORCES ON THE MARCH?



## SOME PROS AND CONS

### I

"The most satisfactory rural life can be attained by increasing the net farm income. Farmers produce the prime necessities of life for the rest of society and therefore society owes them an income great enough to make it possible for them to have all the necessities and conveniences of life and a fair amount of leisure."

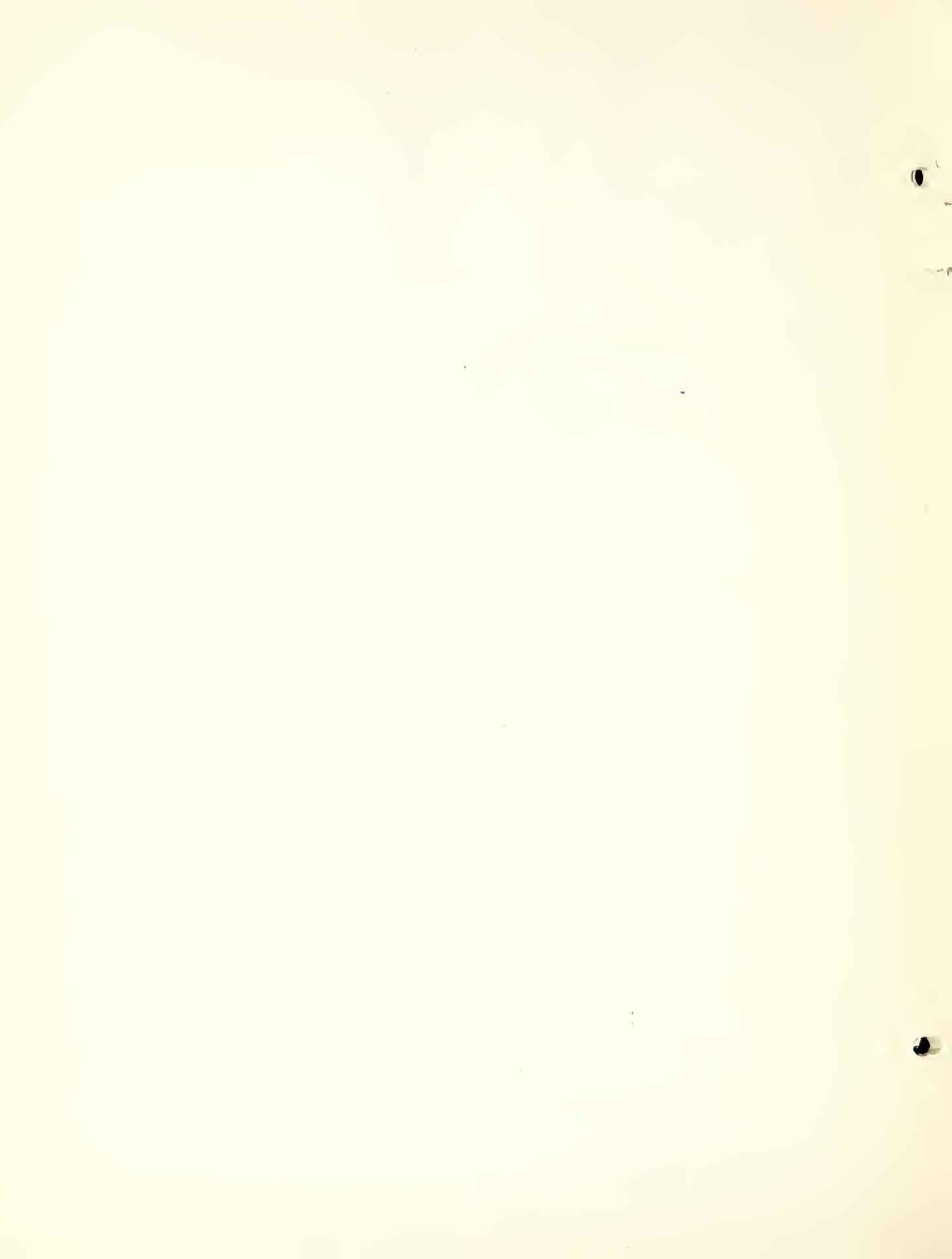
"Furnish farmers adequate income and they will buy what they need and want. They know what they need and want, Guarantee them purchasing power and they will build a good rural life, without special planning or guidance."

### II

"The last way on earth to get a good rural life would be to make it possible for rural people to buy what city people have. A rich rural life decays just to the extent that urban habits of spending, urban interests and urban standards of order penetrate rural areas. The rural population, through high birth rates and healthful living, always has and should continue to guarantee the vitality of the nation. The surest way to happiness and a rich rural life is to perpetuate a considerable degree of isolation, self-sufficiency and native culture in rural areas. City ways are not adapted to rural areas and the contribution rural life can make to the nation will be greatly limited if attempts are made to impose urban ways and standards on country people."

### III

"By a graduated land tax, by preferential crop quotas and allotments, or by outright subsidy, the Government should encourage small holdings, family-sized farms, and discourage or penalize large-scale, industrial farming correspondingly. What we need are more small farms, independently owned or operated. A rural life built on such a pattern will sustain more people, hold more families together and provide not only a more satisfying existence, but a sounder foundation for American democracy."



IV

"A nation can not grow backwards. To penalize large-scale farming operations, with centralized management, advanced machinery, and the utmost use of such commercial and industrial techniques as other businesses employ, is to curb progress, and to press upon agriculture, separately, un-American, peasant-like standards. To do so by taxing large-scale operations out of existence, or by use of differential crop allotments -- with no adjustment payments made, for instance, on more than 100 acres of wheat, per farm--would be to penalize inventiveness and free enterprise, and to indemnify sloth and inefficiency."



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Discussion Group Topic No. 8.

IS THE FARM LABORER GETTING A SQUARE DEAL?

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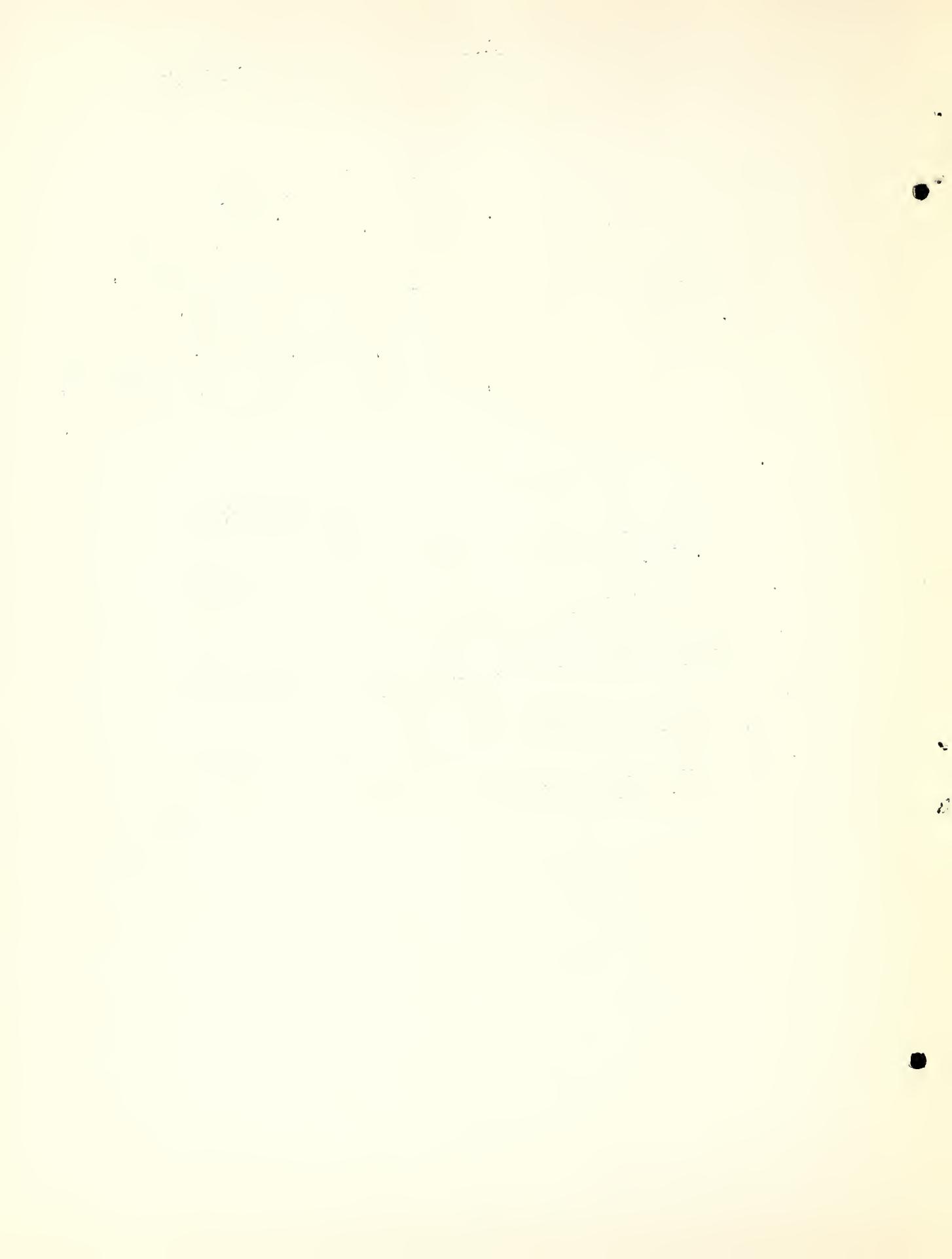
February, 1935.



Topic: IS THE FARM LABORER GETTING A SQUARE DEAL?

There were approximately 2,730,000 laborers working for wages on farms in the United States April 1, 1930. In summer and especially harvest time the number is larger. The labor is of greatly varied character. There are, for instance, the hired men with a family, the transient fruit pickers and harvest hands, usually unmarried, the sugar beet contract workers consisting commonly of parents and children. The wages paid vary, as do other arrangements with employers covering shelter, food, hours of daily and weekly labor, whether employed by hour, day, week, month, etc. Form of payment also is varied. Sometimes it is wholly cash, as in other occupations, but more commonly board and lodging are furnished to unmarried men, and various perquisites to married men.

1. WHAT IS A FAIR BASIS FOR DETERMINING FARM WAGE RATES?
2. SHOULD THERE BE LAWS PROTECTING FARM WORKERS --- MINIMUM WAGE LAWS, WORKERS' ACCIDENT AND INJURY COMPENSATION ACTS, ETC.?
3. SHOULD FARM WORKERS BE ENCOURAGED TO ORGANIZE UNIONS?
4. SHOULD IMMIGRATION LAWS BE CHANGED TO MAKE AVAILABLE MORE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN AS FARM WORKERS?
5. ARE THERE OPPORTUNITIES IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD FOR IMPROVING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FARMERS AND THEIR LABORERS?
6. WHAT CHANCE HAS THE FARM LABORER OF TODAY TO BECOME A FARM OPERATOR AND LAND OWNER?



## SOME PROS AND CONS

### I.

"Farm laborers' wages should be determined by the requirements of a decent standard of living. Farmers should not, any more than manufacturers, 'grind down the faces of the poor.' They should not take advantage of the laborers' necessity, but pay a wage equivalent in purchasing power or standard of living with that paid similar labor in the cities. Wages might be set on a sliding scale - lower in winter when work is slack and employment difficult to obtain, higher in summer and still higher in harvest time, but totaling for the year such an amount as will permit a decent standard of living."

### II.

"Farm laborers' wages are low because farmers cannot fix prices, raise wages, and pass along to the consumer the added costs, as can many manufacturing concerns. In determining wage rates the farmers' ability to pay, as well as the laborers' needs, must be considered. If prices of farm products are raised, farmers will gladly pay better wages and provide better housing for laborers.

"Farm laborers' real wages are much higher than the cash wages paid. Commonly board is furnished unmarried farm labor and nearly always lodging. Married farm laborers generally are provided with a house and frequently with land for a garden, pasture for a cow and sometimes other feed, etc. Farm laborers usually live almost as well as the farmers themselves, and this cannot be said of factory laborers and their employers. Indeed, in recent years some farm laborers have saved a little money, while most farmers have been getting deeper and deeper into debt. If farm wages are to rise it must be through an increase in farmers' income. The income of farmers and the wages of labor rise and fall together."



III.

"Farm workers deserve protection from occupational hazards like other workers. Every year about 5,000 persons engaged in agriculture are fatally injured and 65,000 receive injuries compelling them to give up work temporarily. Increasing use of farm machinery, especially power machinery, has made farm work as hazardous as factory employment. Lack of proper safeguards on machinery and in farm buildings increases the occupational hazards. Though it is commonly considered that there are no occupational diseases in agriculture, there are many dangers due to weather changes and to infectious diseases that may be contracted in handling livestock.

"Farm laborers, unlike industrial workers, have few laws protecting them against exploitation. Many states, in enacting labor legislation, exempt agricultural labor. If a farm hand is injured, he has to depend upon public aid or charity. Minimum farm wages should be fixed and maximum working hours set by law, with extra pay for overtime."

IV.

"Farmers do not make the profit that manufacturers make in normal times, in fact all that most farmers receive in return for their labor and capital is a meager living. They cannot pay even a part of the cost of insurance for farm laborers without further reducing their standard of living. If the government is willing to bear the cost of occupational insurance for farm laborers, farmers would be glad to see such protection given. Farm laborers do not need protective laws because their relationship with employers is more personal than in manufacturing. Farm hands in many areas live in the farm home and are treated as a member of the family."



V.

"Farm laborers, like those in some other countries, notably England, should organize and employ the principle of collective bargaining as trade unions. In so doing they can do considerable to bring about improved working and living conditions and higher wages, and agitate to better advantage for other matters of common interest.

"If proper means are used by farm labor leaders to agitate for and secure due improvement in farm working conditions and wages the influence of their efforts may be far reaching. It will probably be desirable that some degree of organization be maintained, particularly in regions of specialized production in agriculture to properly represent hired agricultural workers when the occasion demands it."

VI.

"Farm laborers need not organize unions because their relations with their employers are close and personal. Difficulties can be adjusted by mutual action. Working and living conditions vary widely from farm to farm. They do not permit uniform action and treatment which unionism would require.

"Imposition of union hours, wages and working conditions would increase food costs in opposition to public demand. Most farm laborers are hired singly on scattered farms. It would be very difficult to organize and maintain farm laborers unions. The high percentage of farm laborers who are transient would prevent farm laborers unions holding membership. Farm laborers working and saving to rent or buy farms will not submit to union regulations."



VII.

"Immigrants supply the low-priced labor which is all that farmers can afford to employ at present. These laborers generally become good citizens, and their children good Americans. American labor does largely skilled work. Immigrants sometimes provide the only labor which will do certain necessary tasks - as thinning beets and similar work. Immigrants are needed to supply the labor necessary to insure the continued prosperity of the country. The nation can properly meet the social problems resulting from the inflow of foreign labor."

VIII.

"We have enough workers already in the country. Many American laborers are unemployed and looking for work. They deserve first consideration. Immigrants hold back national advance in standards of living by working for lower wages and submitting to poorer working and living conditions than will native-born Americans. Immigrants create social problems of assimilation, illiteracy, delinquency, disease and demands for public relief out of proportion to their numbers."



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Discussion Group Topic No. 3

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WHAT IS A DESIRABLE TAX SYSTEM?

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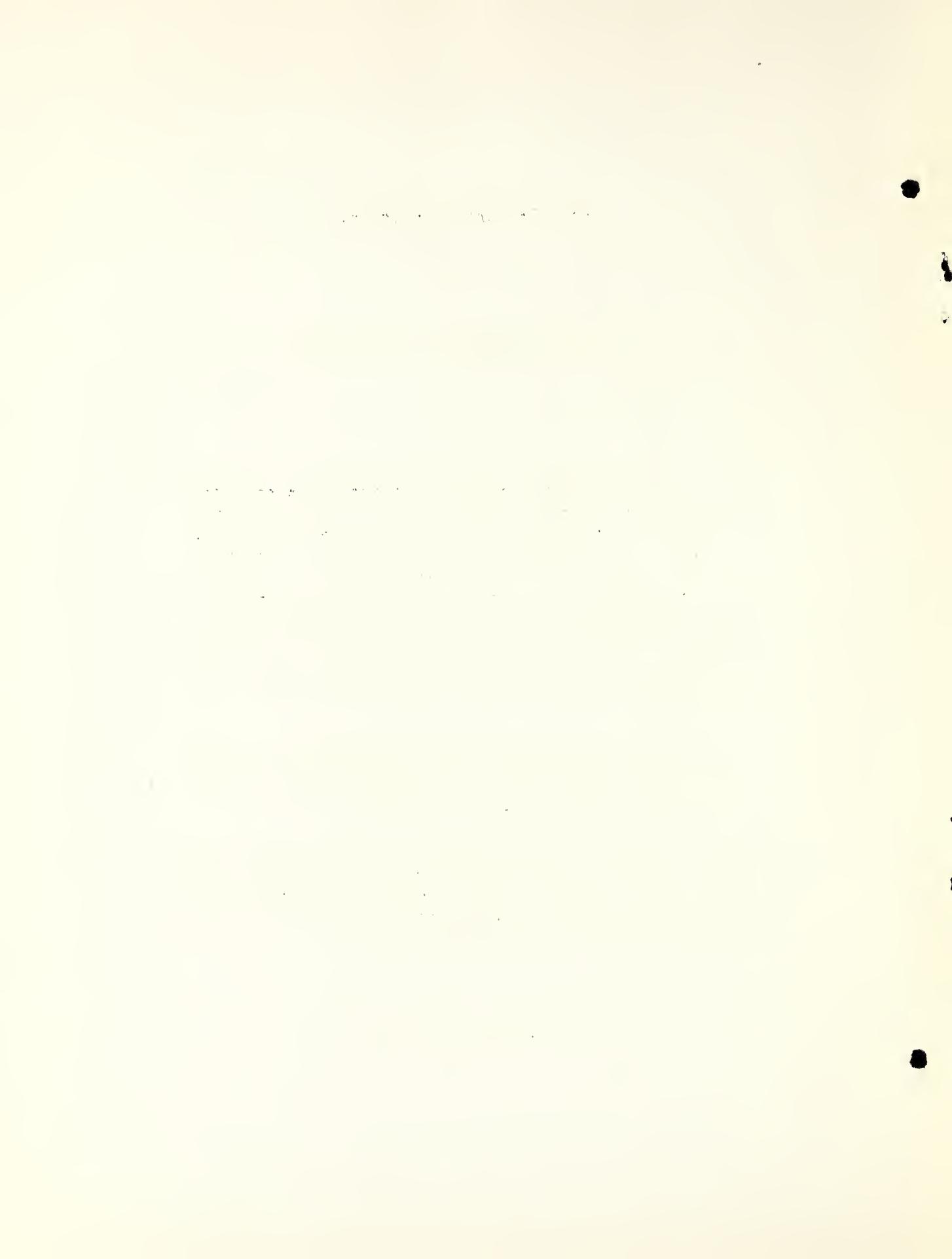
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February, 1935.

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Topic: WHAT IS A DESIRABLE TAX SYSTEM?

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Methods of taxing farm property have changed very little since the Colonial Era. There is considerable opinion among specialists in public finance that the taxation of real property has been overdone. Everywhere, a search is on for new sources of revenue. In certain states limitations have been put on tax rates on real property. Tax reform is a public issue receiving much attention.

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1. WHAT SHOULD BE THE ATTITUDE OF FARMERS TOWARD GENERAL SALES TAXES?
2. HOW CAN THE METHODS OF LOCAL TAXATION OF FARM PROPERTY BE IMPROVED?
3. HOW HEAVILY SHOULD INHERITANCES BE TAXED?
4. SHOULD INCREASING USE OF INCOME TAXES BE MADE BY BOTH STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS?
5. WHAT FORMS OF TAXATION ARE MOST LIKELY TO RESULT IN REVENUES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ABILITY TO PAY?
6. WHAT WOULD BE A PRACTICAL TAX PROGRAM FOR YOUR LOCALITY?



## SOME PROS AND CONS

### I.

"Local tax administration should be made more efficient. Assessment should be put on a scientific basis and should be done by trained persons. Township, school district and county units should improve their business methods. Vigorous efforts should be made to collect taxes. In this way revenues due are more likely to be collected in a fair way."

### II.

"Get rid of all the frills and reduce the cost of government. We have too many services today that our grandparents were able to do without. In our schools, we should pay more attention to reading, writing and arithmetic, and let other subjects suffer if necessary until we can afford them again. We have got to cut costs, and that means lower taxes all around."

### III.

"Let the states take over roads and also guarantee a minimum school term. The states can render services on a large scale and save money in the process. It is the state's responsibility to see to it that every child within its borders has the opportunity to secure a minimum standard of education. Our numerous local units of government were all right for the ox-cart stage. They are not needed now because we have much better methods of transportation."



IV.

"Use the sales tax to avoid adding to property taxes and eventually to reduce the burden on real property. Sales taxes always produce quick results. They get the revenues when other methods mean a long delay. Furthermore, they make everybody conscious of the tax burden, and make everybody help pay the cost of the government. Therefore, we should make a large use of sales taxes."

V.

"The income tax is the fairest that has ever been devised. It is the only method that really raises revenues in accordance with ability to pay. Farmers should favor a graduated income tax--the higher the income, the higher the rate--rather than the sales tax. General sales taxes are more of a burden on low-income than high-income groups. Farmers are a low-income group, and should consistently advocate income as over against sales taxes."

VI.

"Inheritances should be taxed heavily. Our wealth has become concentrated in the hands of relatively few individuals. These persons should not be permitted to bequeath it. Tremendous sums of money could be raised by high inheritance taxes. They become a method of getting some redistribution of income. A high inheritance tax needs to be accompanied by good stiff gift taxes in order to prevent people from evading the inheritance taxes."



VII.

"A single tax on land would make for fairer methods of raising revenue than we now have. At present, the more industrious a man is to improve his property, the more taxes he has to pay. Let us stop penalizing the enterprising family, and exempt improvements. A single tax on land would also help to force idle land into use and thus add to the wealth of the community."

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Discussion Group Topic No. 10

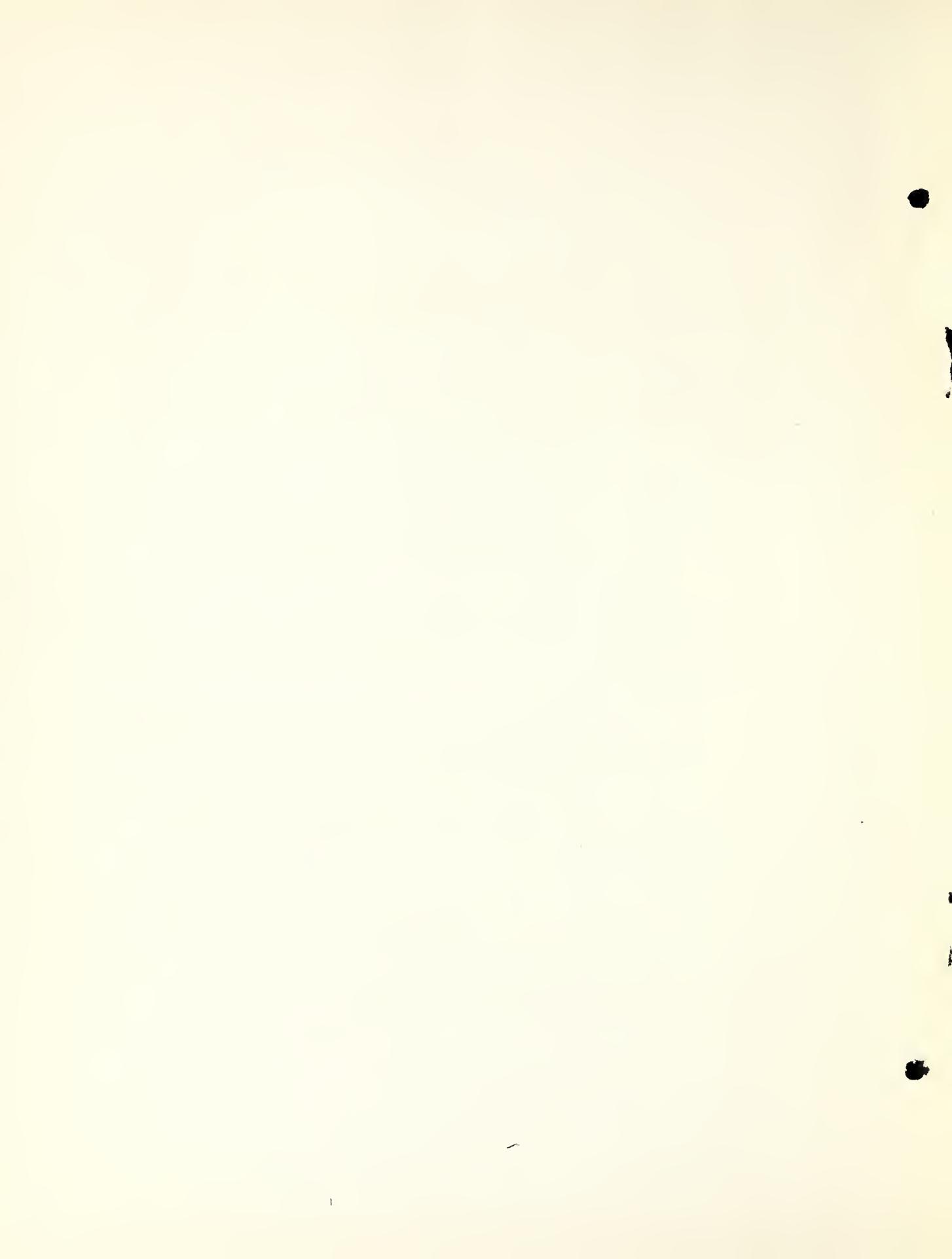
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WHAT SORT OF COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT  
DO AMERICAN FARMERS WANT?  
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This material has been prepared to supply assistance for discussion groups. It is not intended to direct attention to any particular point of view. Neither is it presumed to be a complete or even an orderly presentation of the discussion possibilities of the topic. Its purpose is to stimulate discussion. It is intended to assist in creating opportunities for discussion in the belief that through intense discussion people may find ways of thinking through for themselves vital questions which require democratic decision.

The attention of discussion leaders and others is called particularly to the availability of "Discussion: A Brief Guide to Methods." This contains practical suggestions and information.

Copies of "Discussion: A Brief Guide to Methods," and copies of this and other group discussion topics can be obtained from the Department of Agriculture, Room 202, Washington, D. C., or by writing to the agricultural college of your state.

April, 1935.



Topic: WHAT SORT OF COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT  
DO AMERICAN FARMERS WANT?

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At a time when great emphasis is being put upon the use of governmental means of economic improvement, concern is sometimes expressed as to the effects of these means on older voluntary efforts. American farmers have for a period of over fifty years developed a cooperative economic movement for both market and purchasing. About one-third of the farmers of the nation are members of one or more cooperative associations. There is evidence that farmers are in some respects already more cooperative than other groups of the population.

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1. CAN THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT BE STRENGTHENED THROUGH GOVERNMENTAL EFFORTS TO IMPROVE FARM ECONOMIC CONDITIONS?
2. SHOULD THERE BE A GREATER CONCENTRATED EFFORT PLACED ON COOPERATIVE PURCHASING AND COOPERATIVE MARKETING?
3. SHOULD THE SUCCESS OF COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATIONS BE MEASURED IN TERMS OF PRICE?
4. SHOULD FARMERS STRENGTHEN AND ENLARGE EXISTING COOPERATIVES, OR SHOULD THEY WIDEN THE MOVEMENT BY EMPLOYING NEW TYPES OF COOPERATIVES?
5. SHOULD CHILDREN AND ADULTS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES BE TAUGHT THE PRINCIPLES OF VOLUNTARY ECONOMIC COOPERATION IN A SYSTEMATIC WAY THROUGH SCHOOLS AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS?
6. SHOULD FARMER'S COOPERATIVES COOPERATE OR IDENTIFY THEMSELVES WITH CONSUMER'S COOPERATIVES IN THE CITIES?
7. WHAT ARE THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POSSIBILITIES OF COOPERATIVE FARM CREDIT, INCLUDING CREDIT UNIONS?



## SOME PROS AND CONS

### I

"We tried voluntary cooperation for about two generations and it didn't get us very far. It is too slow. It can't cope with national crises or with international conditions. Therefore, the time has come to rely more upon governmental means than upon cooperatives. Voluntary cooperatives can then continue to supplement government action."

### II

"What farmers can do for themselves is in the long run more important than what governments can do for farmers. This is the lesson of experience, in many nations over many decades. Voluntary action seems slower but it is more lasting. Voluntary efforts provide the soundest base on which to work because they can carry on educational work in small groups. Therefore, the thing to do is to keep at the development of cooperatives and simply have the government supplement voluntary work."

### III

"Farmers have been on the wrong track. They have paid too much attention to marketing cooperatives. The thing to do is to emphasize the farmer as a consumer. This means much more attention to forming organizations for purchasing. In this connection, purchasing can be expanded to include services as well as goods. Cooperative insurance is an example, already being tried successfully in a number of states. Cooperative purchasing is the thing of the future."

### IV

"We need strong cooperative marketing organizations to help get better prices and to save costs in the selling process. We may have neglected purchasing cooperatively but we certainly need to continue the development of marketing cooperatives. Farmers have been exploited both as sellers and buyers. They must try to get together to make a more unified impact on their own markets."



## V

"The cost of moving farm products from the farm to the consumer is entirely too costly and wasteful. The farmer needs a larger share of the consumer's dollar and the consumer is willing that the farmer should have it so long as it does not increase the purchasing price to him. Costs of distribution can and should be reduced by the employment of more producer and consumer cooperatives. By this means of marketing, both the producer and farmer have a chance of getting a square deal by dealing directly with one another."

## VI

"Consumers can buy to better advantage when purchasing their needs as individuals rather than through consumer cooperatives. They study their individual needs and retail prices in more detail than would be possible in purchasing associations. The consumer does not have to buy from any salesman but instead shops around and buys from the firm which will give him the best quality at the lowest prices."

## VII

"Farmers do not need new and easier sources of credit. Easy credit and high prices were the principal reasons why farmers became heavily indebted during and immediately following the war. Later these debts became burdensome and there was a widespread effort to produce more goods in order to meet fixed obligations. This increased production resulted in driving farm prices still lower, and was one of the chief causes of the depression."

## VIII

"The great need of the American farmer is a cooperative system of farm credit. Given fair prices for his commodities, and a system of farm credit that he can use, without paying exorbitant interest rates, and the farmer will pay out on his indebtedness. The farmer asks no favors or special privileges. All he asks is that he be granted the same privileges of borrowing money at reasonable rates of interest, as other businesses have been able to do for years, and he will solve his problems as they arise."



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